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HOW ARE WE LIBERATING ITALY?

THE discovery of a technique of liberation is a problem whose solution still evades us in Italy. There can be no simple formula for it; the issue is as much a matter of political psychology as of organisation. In the eight months since the Italian surrender we have tried to reconcile a system of bureaucratic military control with the claim that we had come to free an oppressed and demoralised people. The first-hand accounts that reach us agree that so far the attempt has failed. We have neither created an efficient system of government nor given aid and encouragement to those who are making the first halting steps towards democracy. Instead, we have taken over the ramshackle machinery of Fascism, compromising here, patching it up a little there, generally failing to recognise that it had already collapsed as an instrument of government last July.

Examine the procedure we have adopted. Our armies edge forward mile by mile; we drive the Nazis from another small town, laid in ruins by bombardment from both sides. With the forward troops come the Security Officers. Besides their military duties they must make immediate provision for the people who have begun to come in from caves in the surrounding hills in which they had taken refuge from the threat of German conscription. Food and shelter must be found while the battle continues only a short distance away. So they look for responsible individuals amongst the people who can be entrusted with the job of securing these. There are many reports of dazed villagers learning to work together on their own initiative for the first time in twenty years and finding new hope amidst their misfortunes. Then, later, Amgot arrives. The vigour and urgency of the front line give way to the indecision of complacent political minds. Often, former Fascist officials (placed under house arrest by the Security Officers and replaced by leaders elected by the people) are reinstated. Amgot officers see in the deposed mayors like-minded men of property and privilege, who have at least the habit of running things after a corrupt Fascist manner. Military expediency prefers them to the nuisance which more democratic but less experienced men might cause. And so the sorry story continues. At no time has there been any serious effort to encourage and assist the real process of liberation—the creation of confidence amongst the Italian people in their power once again to govern themselves.

Has the page now been turned? Two events this week give us cause to hope for both military and political improvement. These events are the successful Allied landing at Anzio, and the meeting during this week-end at Bari of a Convention of the National Liberation Front.

Aided apparently by a spell of fine weather, the Allied landing was bold in its design and skilful in its execution. The sanguine expectations which this news first inspired in the Press—that Rome would be seized by a *coup de main*, or the enemy's lines of communication from the capital cut by a lightning stroke—may have been unduly optimistic. So far as can be judged from the somewhat meagre reports of the operations yet published, a more realistic picture of the situation is that the Allies, exploiting for the first time since Salerno their command of the sea, have caught the enemy unawares and have succeeded in establishing deep in his rear a very substantial bridgehead which menaces at least one of his lines of communication from Rome, and seems likely to compel him to weaken his main defensive positions on the Garigliano River in order to deal with the new threat to his flank. It may be taken for granted that the enemy's reaction will be vigorous; but the Allied Fifth Army should be able to exploit any enemy "thinning out" on the Garigliano. Rome looks less remote from the Allies' grasp than it did a week ago.

As for the Convention at Bari, its outcome in one respect is a foregone conclusion. With the exception possibly of the Christian Democrats, who appear to be lineal successors to Don Sturzo's Catholic Popular Party and whose alignment on the issue of the monarchy is doubtful, the Opposition parties—Liberals, Socialists, Communists, and the Party of Action, formed by a fusion of moderate Socialists and Left-wing Liberals—are predominantly in favour of a Republic. There can be little doubt, therefore, that the Allied Control Commission will receive a resolution from the Convention calling for the abdication of Victor Emmanuel, with the liquidation of the provisional Badoglio administration as its logical solution. We are glad to see that seventy-nine Members of the British Parliament have sent a message of greeting to this first Congress of democratic parties within liberated Europe.

The question is how the Control Commission will react. There will doubtless be a tendency on the part of the British and American representatives to argue that the Moscow Conference's pledge assuring freedom to Italy to choose her own form of democratic Government cannot be carried out until a much wider area of Italy is liberated, and some form of popular vote can be arranged; that it would be impolitic to change horses in military mid-stream; and that the loyalty of senior naval and military officers to the Allied cause could not be relied on if the Allies acquiesced in the removal of Victor Emmanuel from his throne at the instigation of political parties, which will, oddly enough, be mainly concerned with the welfare of the Italian people.

Against these arguments must be set the fact that the administration under Marshal Badoglio has shown no signs of any ability or willingness either to purge the portion of liberated Italy under its control of secret Fascist groups or—still more important—to deal with the country's increasing economic chaos—shortage of commodities, growth of black markets, complete disintegration of railways, post and telegraphs, and spreading unemployment. Liberated Italy cannot be rescued from the material and moral disintegration which is overwhelming it until an administration—however provisional—is formed which can evoke some popular enthusiasm and support. Such a lead can only come from a Popular Front formed by the parties represented at Bari.

Leningrad Relieved

Until the announcement in Russian communiqués of the recovery of Peterhof and suburban townships on the southern outskirts of Leningrad, probably few people in this country realised how close to the city the enemy's positions had lain, and how precarious had been the supply link between Leningrad and the outer world through Volkhov. Coupled with the offensive in a westerly direction from Novgorod, the successful sortie by the Leningrad forces during the past week has been a notable achievement. The elaborate system of trenches and concrete positions erected by the enemy on this front has been decisively broken; already one railway line (that leading indirectly to Moscow through Kirichi) has been freed, and there seems little doubt that the Russians will soon have command of the main Leningrad-Moscow railway running through Tosno and Chudovo. The psychological value of thus re-establishing unhampered communications between Leningrad and the capital will be great. Whether the Russians hope to force a general German withdrawal from this northern sector to the line of Lake Peipus is an open question. Their intention presumably depends upon the progress made by the column moving west from Novgorod in the direction of Luga on the main Leningrad-Pskov railway. In any event, the German Army on this front has been severely mauled and will be in no position to supply reinforcements to other fronts.

Greek Partisans

Must the long and sorry story of Mihailovitch be repeated in Greece before the Allies discover which is the real resistance movement? Mr. Eden had promised that the Greeks were to receive aid similar to that which we now give Marshal Tito. There seems little sign that the promise is being carried out. Of course there are difficulties in the way. But they are very largely political. Mr. Eden's remarks show this clearly enough. "I am going to send to Colonel Zervas supplies as far as I possibly can," he said. "With regard to the other bands, we are sending a certain amount of supplies also." What is the position of the Zervas group? All recent reports from Greece show that the E.L.A.S. forces (partisans of the National Front of Liberation) are at present the only force engaged in serious military operations against the Nazis. There is not action worth mentioning reported from the narrow strip in South Epirus occupied by Zervas. In the north strong German forces recently made repeated attempts to force their way through E.L.A.S. positions in Olympos and the Pierra mountains, which threatened the German lines of communication. They failed. In the Peloponnese, shortage of arms and munitions forced the partisans to give way before large Nazi formations, which eventually broke through to the old historical town of Kalavittra. As a reprisal for the support given by the people to E.L.A.S. they destroyed the town and its surrounding villages, massacring hundreds of their inhabitants. Why do we continue this futile and disruptive support of Zervas? Presumably because he pulls strings with the Greek Government in Cairo.

Supplies for UNRRA

Simultaneously the Commons and the lower House of Congress have adopted appropriations for UNRRA which amount to 1 per cent. of the national income—in our case £80 millions. The Commons were unanimous in backing this wise and generous policy: Congress voted down several hostile amendments. This organisation is in conception an immense improvement on Mr. Hoover's, which earned for itself an ill name after the last war, firstly because it used food as a class weapon to discipline Socialist and starve out revolutionary governments, and secondly because too often it would sell food only for cash down. But UNRRA in its turn is causing anxiety. Firstly it was very slow in getting to work. Secondly, it is to be feared that governments, which have money, can jostle with the needy to secure more than their fair share of foods that are in short supply. Thirdly, the unenlightened decision has been taken to refuse free assistance to enemy countries. They will get only such food as they can afford to buy. To our thinking the only criterion for relief should be physiological need. The morals and politics of hungry men—and children—should concern UNRRA no more than the opinions of a fevered patient concern a doctor. How far Germany will be able to pay cash down we do not know. Last time she could pay only belatedly, and for much less food than she required. The reasons were (1) that under the continued blockade she could neither export goods to pay for food, nor could she re-start manufacture for lack of raw materials; and (2) the French claimed a lien on her gold reserves for reparations. Shall we repeat these stupidities? Another bad decision has confined the work of UNRRA to relief, and blotted out rehabilitation—or nearly so. In view of this the appointment of a Director of Industrial Rehabilitation is puzzling. The choice of Mr. Antonin Fried for this post is unfortunate. As the managing director of the Skoda Works from 1931, he was a leader of the armaments ring, and Skoda under his guidance worked hard to re-arm Hitler.

The Miners' Wage

Under Lord Porter's award, issued last weekend, the miners are given a national minimum wage of £5 a week for adult workers underground, and £4 10s. for surface workers. Pit boys receive proportionate advances as long as they are under eighteen, but there are larger increases for those between eighteen and twenty-one; and the "Bevin boys" (who were offered wages that would not even pay their billeting, food and transport expenses) will profit by these advances, rising gradually to the adult minimum. The colliery owners opposed these concessions, on the ground that the Tribunal had no right to increase wages as long as the cost of living had not materially increased. The miners asked for a minimum of £6 and £5 10s. for adults. £5 a week is not a large wage for a skilled miner in these days. All may be well when conditions make it possible to earn substantially more on piecework; but the real problem is that of the miners who cannot do this. The system of piecework payments in most of the coalfields is chaotic, and makes actual earnings bear very little relation to skill or intensity of work. Indeed, as Lord Porter himself says, the entire method of wage-payment in the mining industry needs a complete overhaul.

Grigg and the Communists

Sir James Grigg and the Communists are conducting a private war. Sir James has often been criticised for holding anti-Soviet views. Recent actions strengthen the impression that the critics were justified. There is the strange case of Major Hooper, who has just been banned from lecturing to service units about the Red Army. He was one of the few men who correctly estimated Soviet strength, even at a time when the War Office experts were giving the Red Army six weeks of resistance. If he has been good enough to lecture, with success, in the past, why the sudden reversal of policy? And then there is the case of the war correspondents of the *Daily Worker*. Of course, Grigg had a strong argument when he suggested that Communists had a divided loyalty, and he quoted the Springhall case as an extreme example. But the War Office could vet any particular Communist reporter, and no one regards this as the real or the adequate reason. I see that the *Daily Worker* now denounces the War Office for refusing to allow army collaboration in the B.B.C. programme on Red Army Day. We await the reply that Sir James is no doubt preparing.

PARLIAMENT: Living and Learning

OF thirty-one speeches (including Butler's and Ede's) in the two-day debate on the Education Bill, nearly twenty were largely concerned with the religious issue. No fewer than five—two of them of considerable length—were by Roman Catholic Members, stating the Roman Catholic case, which was also stated by a few non-Catholic members representing partly Roman Catholic constituencies. The Roman Catholics' representation in Parliament on this occasion was thus more than twice as large as the proportion of the total population claimed by them, though their homogeneity and uniformity of attitude is such that their case might well have been put in one or two speeches at most. This implies, of course, no criticism of the Chair: it is a tribute to the vigour and pertinacity of Roman Catholic organisers and propagandists.

Stokes, of Ipswich, was the only Roman Catholic spokesman who deviated in any respect from the rigid line of their argument. He said that non-Catholic teachers might be acceptable in Catholic schools, where Catholics were not available, to teach "non-essential subjects." Ede challenged the authority for this "offer": in all the discussions with official Roman Catholics, their demand in this respect had been totalitarian. ("Yes, even the games-master," one North-country bishop is reported to have said.) Sir Patrick Hannon spoke of the intolerable "burden" that the Bill would place on the impoverished Catholic community, and of freedom for minorities; Butler interrupted to say that his figures were "very much exaggerated." The real show-down on the Roman Catholic issue will not come until the Committee stage of the Bill; Sir Geoffrey Shakespeare and other Free Churchmen made it clear that any upsetting of the "very delicate balance" of the Bill in favour of the Roman Catholics (to whom "at least six major concessions" have already been made) would oblige Free Churchmen to oppose it.

The House is always said to be "at its best" (i.e. its most heated and irrational) when religious controversy is in the air. Certainly most of the speeches in this debate bore every mark of thorough preparation. Mr. Henry Brooke, a smooth and earnest young Tory, was understood to be "speaking for the Archbishop of Canterbury" (whom some Members believed capable of articulation in Another Place); so that there was a sigh of relief when he said, half-way through his speech, "May I now give my own personal opinion?" His perhaps-semi-officially-endorsed Anglican proposal was that managers of church schools should be "enabled to borrow money for carrying out their duties under this Bill on the same favourable terms as are available to local authorities."

Not one Member arose, as would surely have happened a few decades ago, to state a Secularist case and challenge Butler's basic conception that universal religious education is desirable. Here, indeed, is a revealing passage from the speech of Professor Savory, a fiery, stentorian old Ulster Protestant (whom the Speaker piquantly juxtaposed to the ultramontane Papalist Commander Bower, son-in-law of Lord Strickland):—

> Professor Savory: . . . a leading educationalist . . . was describing a Scripture lesson given by an unwilling teacher. There was something in the tone which the teacher employed in giving the lesson which caused one of the pupils to put this question to him: "Sir, is what you are saying true?" The teacher unfortunately replied: "Well, you can believe it if you like, but I do not." Can we imagine any attitude more destructive of real education than that attitude on the part of a teacher?
>
> Mr. Sorensen: It was very honest, anyhow.
>
> Professor Savory: Yes, it was honest, but was it right and proper? Was it not an abuse of the privilege of the teacher?

The most substantial and thoughtful speeches in the debate were those of Kenneth Lindsay, Clem Davies, and Moelwyn Hughes. John Parker, from the Labour front bench, followed Butler competently—showing statistically that 2 per cent. of the nation enjoyed a 56 per cent. representation in the House. Butler himself handled his big moment with ability and charm, though he lacks "fire in the belly"; he quoted from Wordsworth, the Book of Common Prayer, and Cowper.

The House is chewing over its half-loaf.

PONTIFEX MINOR

FRENCH DEMOCRACY AT WORK

The French people, we may be sure, are counting with impatience the weeks that must elapse before their Allies open the final struggle for their liberation. It must be for them a painful ordeal to watch the enemy completing on their soil the barriers and the minefields that guard their prison. It is typical of their gallant temper that the one articulate cry that reaches us from their spokesmen is for arms for the underground movement of resistance. In Algiers, meanwhile, the Consultative Assembly is working on the political problems of liberation. It has affirmed by acts as well as words the sincerity of its democratic faith. It accepted a reasonable and conciliatory settlement of the awkward tangle in the Lebanon. In Algeria the Gaulliste administration has carried out a reform full of promise for its Arab population—how necessary such reforms are is shown by an article we publish this week from a British officer in North Africa. He is right to stress the selfishness of the settlers; but there are groups, notably the teachers, who deserve and possess the confidence of the Arab population. The native Jews, disfranchised by Vichy, have recovered in full all the rights they had lost. The extension of citizenship to wider masses of the Arab population is a much bolder measure of democratic justice. Under the Third Republic, before they could secure the franchise and full civic rights, they had to renounce their allegiance to the Canon Law of Islam. That condition is now withdrawn and only a simple test of literacy retained. In the tense economic struggle between the interests of French settlers and native farmers, this means in the balance a considerable gain to the political weight of the Arab population. The Popular Front was foiled in the generous policy it wished to carry out for the benefit of the Arabs throughout North Africa. This act of emancipation carries its promise not to them only but to all the native peoples whose development will depend on the France of to-morrow.

The chief business of the Assembly has been to plan the process by which the French people will rebuild a democratic Republic. One obstacle has been removed from their path. Mr. Eden disavows the idea that Amgot should function as a provisional administration in liberated France. That notion was an affront to French self-respect. Amgot will function only in the area of active operations and on the lines of communication. That should mean that the provisional administration will be the Council over which General de Gaulle presides. As the months went on, it has come to look less like the dictatorship which some critics feared it might become; working closely with the Assembly, to which it is in effect responsible, it has become as good a substitute for a representative government as can be created in the circumstances of to-day. How it will evolve in the transitional period, after it is established on French soil, the Assembly is now debating. The Government proposed a strikingly undemocratic scheme for a Constituent Assembly which was rejected. The Socialist, M. Vincent Auriol, put forward a better and democratic plan which is still under discussion. The Communists were alone in proposing local elections by show of hands. The general view is that the election should be postponed until a register can be compiled, after the prisoners and conscripted workers have returned from Germany. It is a significant indication of the spirit of this reviving democracy that all parties are agreed that in this decisive election women, for the first time in France, shall vote.

It is natural that the Assembly is hotly determined to punish the traitors who collaborated with the enemy. To deal with these men, it feels, is a right that flows from the sovereignty it has assumed: it resents, intelligibly enough, any efforts of the Anglo-American authorities to protect them. It is inevitable, in France as in other occupied countries, that the meaner and more brutal of these men should pay with their lives for what they have done. Former Ministers and officials of Vichy, who themselves drew up lists of patriots, whom they handed over to the Germans to be shot as hostages, can expect no mercy. The thugs who formed Laval's S.S. terror squads will meet with prompt justice. But the Free French should beware of anything resembling a counter-terror. For a year after the collapse the average unheroic man was stunned. He cringed, conformed and collaborated, content to follow where Marshal Pétain led. The wise course will be to ignore this record of cowardice and abasement. At the most these temporary collaborators should be excluded from all public offices for the future. A widespread proscription of all who collaborated with the enemy from motives of timidity or greed would divide the French nation to its peril.

The real problem that confronts French democracy is, as we see it, much less to punish the unworthy minority than to bring about a transfer of power. The real motive that inspired the reactionaries of Vichy in their tactics of collaboration was their fear of the French masses. They had their chance to do wholeheartedly what the reaction in France had sought to do timidly during five generations—to undo the work of the Revolution. The task of the Fourth Republic will be to carry it forward. The driving force behind it comes from the workers and the Left—including the Catholic Left and the intellectuals. It can deal easily with the great concentrations of capital and the heavy industries, because the Germans usually acquired a majority holding in their companies. The obvious course is that the French State should take over what the Germans must surrender. There lies the opportunity for a bold replanning of industry for the common good. We should feel happier about this prospect if a soldier less closely linked to Marshal Pétain than General Giraud controlled the army that soon may land in France with a high proportion of Africans in its ranks. Our own democracy will have to be vigilant if its sister in France is to enjoy its chance. The influences in Washington and Whitehall which chose Darlan and Peyrouton as their instruments are still awake.

COTTON-WOOL PLANNING

Hardly a week passes nowadays without the publication of some scheme for the conduct of British industry after the war. There are general schemes for industry as a whole, from that of Unilever to the plan issued by a notable group of signatories under the auspices of Nuffield College; and there are, in growing profusion, plans for particular trades and industries, proposed by representative bodies or groups and offered to the Government as this or that section's contribution to the national symposium on post-war economic planning. The latest of these sectional projects lies before us, in the shape of a "Report of the Cotton Board Committee" set up to enquire into post-war problems, submitted this month to the President of the Board of Trade. In this Report, as in some others, we have leaders of the working-class movement making joint recommendations with representatives of the employing and merchanting interests, and acting explicitly on the assumption that post-war industrial policy is to be adjusted by common agreement.

This, of course, is what the present Government wants, and what it has clearly instructed its Civil Servants to aim at in the drafting of reconstruction plans. It is said to represent a belief that there exists between the main section of capitalist and working-class organisations a sufficient common basis for a workable compromise to be possible; but it may equally stand for a belief that, if this line is followed, the inevitable outcome will be to give Capitalism a new lease of life. For what is most evident in the great majority of the plans that are now being brought forward—including this Report of the Cotton Board's Committee—is that the effective outcome of the suggested schemes will depend very much less on their structure than on the way in which they are actually worked.

Outside the relatively very narrow group of industries in which the Labour Party stands committed to immediate nationalisation, there might well be points of resemblance between the schemes which would be drafted for the future conduct of industries by employers' associations and Trade Unions, even if each side were to draft its own scheme without any consultation with the other. At any rate, this would probably be true of most of the major manufacturing industries. Each side would recognise the need for some body to "represent the industry," and to provide for a larger amount of co-ordinated planning and control than existed in most cases before the war. Each side would want some sort of "representative Board," recognised and consulted by the Government in its dealings with the industry's affairs, and armed to some extent with compulsory powers. Each side would give some recognition to the need for representation of the public interest in relation to the industry, but would be inclined to insist on the industry being left, in a considerable degree, to manage its own internal affairs. The employers, of course, would be concerned mainly with the maintenance of profits and the supply of capital for development, whereas the Trade Union leaders would put their emphasis mainly on the payment of adequate wages and the maintenance of employment for their members at a satisfactory level. But the machinery for implementing these two quite different purposes would probably turn out to be largely the same; and the real dividing issue would be not one of machinery, but one of the policy which the proposed machinery should be used to serve.

In other words, the fundamental issue for the future of British industry is not one of organisation, but one of policy and of the realities of political power. Let us suppose that an industry, such as the cotton industry, is equipped after the war with some sort of controlling Board representing all the various sectional interests, including Labour, and including also representatives of the public, nominated by the Government, with probably an impartial chairman, such as the Cotton Board's Report appears to have in mind. How would such a body actually behave? Evidently, its behaviour would depend largely on the economic attitude and policy of the Government responsible for the nation's general affairs. If this Government were successfully following a policy of "full employment," so as to ensure a high level of demand for the industry's products, the Board would readily adapt itself in many respects to the conditions of an expanding economy, or would, at the least, behave much less restrictively than it would be inclined to do if the Government were acquiescent in a return to *laissez-faire* and the familiar ups and downs of the trade cycle. If the Government were strongly "socialistic" in its general outlook, and appointed strongly "socialistic" persons to represent it on the Board, the Board would to a large extent accept the necessity of working in the consumers' interests, as long as it believed that the Government knew its own mind and was firmly seated in political power. On the other hand, if the Government were "anti-socialist," the Board would almost certainly follow to the best of its power a line of anti-social monopoly, endeavouring to carry its Trade Union members along with the rest by sharing the gains of monopoly with the employees, and trying to build barriers against the entry of new firms or additional labour.

All this comes out very clearly in the Cotton Board's Report. Here are proposals for a representative body armed with considerable compulsory powers which are clearly usable for either good or ill. Here are suggestions, on the one hand, for carrying on into the period of peace the making of standard utility goods so as to lower production costs without cutting wages, and, on the other hand, for the enforcement of minimum prices and the prevention of new entrants into the various sections of the industry. Here are plans for eliminating "redundant" capacity, and also plans for promoting an adequate level of new investment in order to enable the industry to meet post-war demands to the full. It is impossible to condemn any of these plans out of hand. No one can deny either that there was in 1939 redundant capacity in certain sections of the cotton industry, or that "weak selling" was a serious evil. But these things can be admitted, and it can still be felt that there would be terrible danger in putting into the hands of a Board representing the industry—even if it included the Trade Unions—power to fix minimum prices, to eliminate surplus capacity, and to restrict the entry of new firms. No doubt these powers are all asked for only under the condition that their exercise shall be subject to some form of Government consent. But that only brings us back to the fundamental issue. What sort of Government is it to be that will give or refuse its consent to the numerous proposals by the Board of the industry in its exercise of these compulsory powers? Is it to be the same sort of Government as erected the Iron and Steel Federation and the Colliery Owners' Central Council into power price-fixing monopolies? If so, the proposed Board will obviously become a most dangerous instrument for exploiting the consumers—only the more dangerous if the Trade Union leaders are persuaded to throw their weight on its side in the belief that they can thereby improve the economic status and prospects of their own members, albeit at the expense of the rest of the public.

This is the quintessential dilemma of post-war economic planning. The one really vital issue is that of the realities of political power. British industry has been for a generation in the grip of restrictive monopoly, based on a fundamentally defeatist economic attitude among the members of the political and economic governing classes. The political governing classes have had one supreme objective—the maintenance of the class system; and the economic governing classes have told them that the class system can be preserved only by throwing their weight on the side of monopoly capitalism and enduring its restrictive practices in a restrictive world. As long as these twin forces retain their power, any sort of economic machinery that may be established will be bound to work in a restrictive way.

Are we, therefore, to conclude that there is a tacit assumption that the pre-war conditions of the limited market and of mass unemployment are to be allowed to come back? If that is to happen, all these plans for representative Boards and the like will inevitably become the instruments of highly restrictive monopoly, much more competent and cunning in the use of monopoly powers by the experiences of wartime control. Nothing can stop that from happening, short of a political change which will put into power men who make full employment and high production to meet the consumers' needs the governing principles of their economic policy, and are able to get into the heads of the electorate the idea that this is what they stand for and that they can stand for it successfully only if public opinion gives them assured and confident support.

To create such a public opinion, and to inspire such confidence, should be the Labour Party's task; and if the political leaders of Labour could be induced to give the right lead, the danger of the Trade Union leaders coming to terms with monopoly capitalism would speedily disappear. The Trade Union leaders are disposed to fall in with the capitalists' projects precisely because they share the capitalist's defeatist outlook on the future. They would follow, gladly, a clear lead of a different sort; but so far no such lead has been given. Yet the time is running short: the plans of monopoly capitalism are already far advanced; and, as we have seen, these plans are cleverly designed to gull the workers in the absence of an unmistakably clear political lead.

BURMA IN THE FUTURE

IN 1885 the independent Kingdom of Burma was extinguished, and the country became a Province of the British Indian Empire.

In August, 1943, by solemn proclamation, Burma's recovery of her sovereign status was announced to the world. Pending the framing of a free constitution, she is provisionally ruled by a Burmese Dictator, with Burmese Ministers and officials.

Doubtless such members of the educated class in Burma as follow events realise that the "independent" Government is not able to take any action which would displease the unobtrusively present agents of the Japanese Crown. They may not know that the tide of war has already turned against the Axis: but they can see that the land, source of the people's wealth, is rapidly going out of cultivation, while trade languishes, because the great Indian market is lost, and Japanese shipping is too busy elsewhere to provide a substitute. But what the peasant sees, in this country of peasants, is that the British overlord has been driven out, and a purely Burmese Government restored. If he sees a newspaper—and most people can read—he learns that his country is again a sovereign state, communicating on an equal footing with other such states, sending and receiving ambassadors; there is the nucleus of a national army—picked men from among those who took arms in 1941-42 against the British and shared in a successful campaign. If he suffers from some hardships, and some restrictions on his liberty, he is assured that they will disappear when the war has ended in victory for Burma and her great ally.

British and American and Chinese forces may shortly be on the move to turn the Japanese out of Burma. What arguments are we putting forward that will make the rural masses accept the renewal of our rule, or that will at least dissuade them from fighting to preserve their country's recovered freedom?

Clearly the time has gone by for asking them to listen to the old cautious promises of gradual evolution in the direction of Dominion Status within the British Commonwealth of Nations. These promises never meant much to the peasant, who thinks in terms of a return to the old glories of the Burmese Kingdom; and the politician to whom he listens will be neither able nor willing to persuade him to accept a restoration of foreign rule unless he can promise, believing himself and inspiring belief, that it will be merely a transition stage, and that as soon as it is physically possible the Burmese will be invited to frame for themselves a free constitution, and to negotiate with Britain on a footing of equality—so far as there can be equality between a strong and a weak state—a treaty settling their relations for the future.

Such an invitation was given to India by Sir Stafford Cripps in 1941. It cannot be expected that Burma will be content with anything less liberal than this, and there are no good reasons why she should. Admittedly, the treaty will have to include special arrangements for defence until Burma can create her own defence forces, and for the hill-tribes which can at present neither participate in a Burmese representative system nor be handed over in the lump to Burmese overlordship. Such restrictions may be hard to swallow, but they arise from the nature of things, and should be accepted by the practical common sense, and freedom from intransigence, which are part of the inheritance of the Indo-Chinese races. What will not be accepted is that Burma, which was once a sovereign state, which lost that status, and which has now regained it, should lose it once more and be left with a mere assurance—which would not now be believed—that she may after some indefinite period of probation aspire to recover it by the grace of the British Parliament.

Sullen acquiescence in a rule reimposed by force is the most we can hope for—and we may not even win that without long strife—if we are going to flout the national sentiment of a people with a high degree of national unity, not weakened by deep divisions of religion, caste, or class. Those who think that a paternal government could again be accepted, provided it threw open a career to local talent and fended off foreign exploitation, are far behind the times. It must be remembered that the 1935 Act, which separated Burma from India, already gave a near approach to full internal autonomy. Since the Act came into force in 1937, Burma under our military protection actually enjoyed more freedom than India. Ministers responsible to a legislature elected on a very wide franchise controlled not only the whole sphere of the Indian Provincial Governments, but also much of what in India was left to the Centre—that is, to the Viceroy, since the responsible Centre contemplated by Parliament never came into being. The British Governor, it is true, had reserve powers, but they were seldom exercised. The Burmese Ministry had substantially a free hand not only in domestic affairs, but in economic relations with other states. Their superior status was significantly shown when, without British control, they negotiated tariff and immigration agreements with Indian delegates responsible not to the Indian people, but to the Viceroy. The Burmese might have endured, for some years yet, subjection with such a large measure of autonomy, because such endurance was the price of British protection. But we failed to protect them from invasion, with its trail of terror and ruin. We could not deliver the goods, and we can no longer ask them to pay the price.

Britain is in honour bound to repair the material destruction, and to restore industry, trade, and communications up to a point at which the country will be solvent and able to hold orderly elections for the framing of a constitution and the establishment of a free Government. It may take several years to reach that point, but there must be a definite promise that, so soon as it is reached, there will be no delay in opening the door of freedom. The time for the promise is now. The time for encouraging the leaders of Burmese opinion to discuss their plans for the future is when military occupation gives place to civil administration.

The 1935 Constitution, over a great part of India, broke down after two years' working. In Burma, though with grave faults, it continued to function up to the time of the Japanese conquest. The people have shown that they can work self-governing institutions, and may well make a better showing in future with some form of government freely adopted and less closely copied from Britain. Not only are there no profound internal divisions to impair unity, but, whatever resentment there has been against the actions of the British Government, there has been singularly little animosity against the British as a race. European culture first touched Burma over a century ago; its influence has been constantly growing, and has flowed almost wholly through British channels. The relations between the two peoples will therefore be intimate in the future as in the past, whatever the political shape of things may be. Let us see to it that these relations are, as far as may be, of equal friendship. The day for tutelage has passed, and in future we must be ready to give such help as a ward newly come of age may willingly take at the hands of a former guardian whose power and experience he knows.

Time presses. If we fail now to make a clear statement of our intentions, we may be condemning Burma to years of hopeless guerrilla warfare, such as followed the annexation of 1885: we certainly shall alienate a friendly and freedom-loving people, whom nature and history ought to make our allies.

A LONDON DIARY

Lord Beaverbrook has been doing his best to reach agreement with the United States about post-war flying. His estimate of the number of aeroplanes required by Britain and the U.S. after the war seems a good deal higher than that made in recent expert articles published in this journal. The number is very likely to be something between the conservative estimate of shipping companies and the imaginative picture conjured up by the air interests. Whatever the figure, the fact remains that unless we get a rational scheme of world airways after the war, we shall be in for a period of hideous and dangerous competition. The two agreed principles which Lord Beaverbrook was authorised by Mr. Roosevelt to announce really take us nowhere at all. The "right of innocent passage" means nothing except that if you are not a spy and don't carry a bomb you have the right to travel by air. Shall we be asked: "Is your journey really innocent?" The "right to land anywhere for refuelling and other non-traffic purposes," is equally elementary and leaves open all the question of the right to fly where and in whose aeroplane, the common use of bases and all the rest of it. I wonder if instead of concentrating on a limited agreement, which American air interests, in their imperialist mood, seem not too keen to reach, it would not be better to go all out for a world airways company?

* * *

I hope, in spite of rumours, that Lord Beaverbrook will not give up this job of trying to give us a sane international air service after the war. His recent visit to Marrakesh and his close personal friendship with the Prime Minister naturally call to mind his activities at the end of the last war, and the influence he then had over Mr. Lloyd George. I cannot better the comment made on that period by Graham Wallas in his book *Our Social Heritage*.

> If a newspaper proprietor, who has made his wealth by his skill in manipulating men, gets personal access to such a statesman, he can surround him with a refreshing and exhilarating atmosphere of quick understanding and cynical amusement, and with the subtle flattery of the newspapers which the statesman reads. A few weeks of this process may divert to world destruction national energies, which might have been used for world co-operation. In the election of December, 1918, Mr. Lloyd George made it impossible for him to use at Paris the power of Britain for the promotion of reconciliation and goodwill in Europe. Because of what he then said and did children a century hence in every European country who might have lived in health will be crippled or killed by disease; youths and girls who might have entered into the kingdom of knowledge will toil in ignorance; nations who might have been friends will hate and fear each other. After the election, Lord Northcliffe's *Weekly Dispatch* announced that, "Those on the inside of the election are warmly congratulating Lord Beaverbrook on the success of his handling of it and of the Prime Minister. It was largely due to him that the first flabby election appeals—including the address of the Prime Minister himself—were brought into line with the Eight Points of the Northcliffe Press, on which the election was practically fought. Lord Beaverbrook has been offered high office, but he is understood to have declined it, partly for reasons of health, and also because he wishes to exercise his great journalistic talent in developing his *Sunday Express*, to which the *Weekly Dispatch* offers a very hearty welcome."

* * *

In the uneasy past like-minded people were divided about "sanctions." Unless you were prepared to go to war (in which case economic and diplomatic pressure might be effective) your bluff might be called. This dilemma strengthened the appeasers and frustrated the League over Abyssinia. But that failure didn't mean that the provision made in the Covenant for sanctions was a bad idea. Sanctions are now being used. The question is whether they are used against the friends or the enemies of democracy. Take the case of South America. Mr. Hull has been convinced that the Bolivian revolt was but one part of a general Fascist conspiracy in the Western Hemisphere. After consultation with other Latin American republics the State Department has refused to recognise the revolutionary government and has recalled the American Ambassador. Will they leave it at that? I doubt it. I should expect to hear that America will freeze Bolivian funds and cut off Lease-Lend supplies. Intervention in the internal affairs of other peoples? Yes. Another proof that this is a war of a new kind. 1940 taught us that the Nazis' attack on a country may be two-thirds over before the fighting begins. Subversive activity on the scale they are working at present in South America has to be countered in some way. All the better if it can be done by non-military intervention. We have plenty of friends in these countries. If we give them the help they need it would not be so very long before we should find another change in Bolivia. The Argentine decision to break with the Axis, while by no means marking the end of its Fascist intrigues, is at least the result of Allied pressure. Don't denounce this as a disguised form of dollar imperialism: Mr. Hull is acting cautiously and sensibly.

* * *

Spain is a similar case for us. There has been plenty of evidence that the Franco regime is beginning to rock. Monarchists, sections of the army and some of the wealthy classes are seeking desperately for a means to rid themselves of the embarrassment of Hitler's puppet, without opening the way for that social change which is made more likely by the recent formation of a Democratic Front. Up to now the Caudillo has kept power by balancing English benevolence and Nazi support on the fulcrum of neutrality. But as both of these weaken, so his dictatorship becomes more unstable. I think it likely that the Government contemplates a stronger form of pressure than its previous protests. Franco lives on British navicerts for oil and foodstuffs. The oil could be saved for our own war front. As for foodstuffs, I wish we would agree to allow the necessary minimum to go to Belgium and other hungry and friendly countries.

* * *

So far as I can judge from fairly regular listening-in to the B.B.C. European Service, British propaganda is making no effort to address the non-German elements in the garrison of Hitler's vaunted West Wall. Yet news has been published that von Rundstedt's army in France and the Low Countries contains formations—part volunteer, part conscript—of Russians, Georgians, Poles, Czechs, Croats, Spaniards, Dutchmen, Belgians and Indians. Except for the relatively few among them who are members of Fascist groups in their own countries, these men can have little stomach for a battle with British and American troops. Under German officers, or distributed (as they probably are) among German regiments, they will doubtless have to carry out their orders and fight; but their reliability, from the German standpoint, must surely depend ultimately on how frightened they are about their probable treatment by the Allies if they surrender. What, especially, of those who can successfully plead that they joined Germany's armed forces under duress? I should have thought that a wise move in political warfare would be to publish an assurance that all such cases would be sympathetically examined, and that Russians, in particular, who were taken prisoner would be given the option of returning to the U.S.S.R. or emigrating overseas under UNRRA auspices.

* * *

"Noisy; very noisy," was the general verdict about last Friday's raid on London. The ineffectual bombing was no worry; it was the terrific barrage that called for remark. One couldn't help remembering that September weekend when the blitz started in real earnest. At that time London had very little defence except the over-worked fighter squadrons which had beaten back the Luftwaffe's day attacks. Turning out some old papers this week, I came across a copy of *The Londoner* for March, 1939. This was a paper that the Tories used to circulate for the purpose of attacking the Labour majority on the L.C.C. In it was an article headed "They Shall Not Pass," which claimed that, thanks to the National Government "London may sleep peacefully in its bed . . . England will not be invaded by great air hosts . . . London's defence is safe." What would the Socialists do if they came to power and found a mighty defence force at their disposal? "Would they use it as an instrument of policy to help one side in Spain or China? That is the risk. The National Government will never do anything so criminal as to commit you to war to aid purely foreign causes." On the other side, "to defend London against those who would despoil her" was the aim of Neville Chamberlain and his Defence Ministers. "And they have succeeded. That is definite . . . London is now armed and well prepared to repel the invading hosts which might . . . attack her from the air." You can see that they were quite sure about it!

* * *

The controversy in the *Observer* between Tom Jones, once secretary to the Cabinet, and Mr. Butlin, director of holiday camps, stops just where it should begin. Obviously some "solitudes" must be disturbed by holiday campers, and whether this is good or bad depends on the position chosen and on the size of the camp in relation to its surroundings. The lovely piece of Welsh coast about which Tom Jones is very naturally concerned can survive the arrival of quite a lot of holiday-makers, but if the size of the camp is too big it will encounter lively opposition not only from lovers of solitude, but also from Welsh nationalists, who are apt to have very strong views about keeping the Sabbath, and who would regard the arrival of 5,000 holiday-makers as a foreign and godless invasion. As to the threat to Snowdonia, the answer is to make the area a national park. That, in general, is the answer to all these vexed problems. We must plan where our camps should be and how to prevent them from sprawling all over England and turning every solitude into a multitude. If Snowdon and the Lakes, Dovedale, parts of Scotland and South-West England and other areas are kept as national parks, then I should accept as desirable the creation of holiday camps outside these areas, each of which will be a place for the genuine wanderer and lover of unorganised beauty.

Critic

THIS ENGLAND

A 5/- prize for the first entry in this column goes to Helen Gosse.

Paste entries on postcard or slip of paper and give details of origin. Address to THIS ENGLAND, 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1.

Whisky sold at more than 30 times its pre-war value at an auction sale in Glasgow yesterday. . . . The tense atmosphere was such that two men fainted before the sale had been going 10 minutes.—*News Chronicle*.

Americans or Collectors.—Unique Roman Ring, first century . . .—Advert. in the *Times*.

Short Story writers wanted, able to condense in 2,000 words plots of moral uplift that will hold readers tense.—Send specimen MSS. to Short Story Dept., *Christian Herald.—Daily Telegraph.*

Even Southgate People misuse emergency water dams.—*Headline in Palmers Green and Southgate Gazette.*

Westminster City Council's rat-catcher, Mr. Hopper, is in future to be called Rodent Officer. His salary has been increased from £4 17s. to £5 10s. a week.—*Evening Standard.*

REFORM OR REVOLT?

[This letter which reaches us from a correspondent in North Africa is referred to in our leading article this week]

Not long ago I stood in both Constantine and Philippeville and watched Gen. de Gaulle drive through cheering throngs. Both towns gay with decorations to greet this man whom they've recently—and only recently—acclaimed as the Man of France. A lot of the enthusiasm was forced and "arranged." His visits fomented trouble and brought out deep-rooted problems. In Constantine he promised the Arabs equal citizenship and other reforms. The Arabs are naturally pleased but sceptical. The French, although apparently pleased and turning out in great style to greet de Gaulle's first official visit to these cities, are inwardly very annoyed and frightened. A café proprietor said to me, "Ce n'est pas bon," and this is the general feeling.

And well may the French be frightened. As I stood in the cheering throng, a mixture of French and Arab, I realised, as I'd not realised quite so vividly since I stepped off the boat into Algiers eight months ago, how pathetic and terrible is the condition of the Arabs. The contrast with the French would be unbelievable to anyone who had not seen it. It has been seen by thousands of British and American soldiers, but, unfortunately, a great many have accepted the French "explanation."

The condition of the Arabs is appalling. They live in the most foul hovels and they are for the most part dressed in rags. Their animals live with them. It is not unusual to see a small room housing four or five adults, several children and babies, and some goats and chickens. They all smell, are dirty, lousy, and disease-ridden. Lavatories of any kind just do not exist. Their villages in the vast countryside are as bad as the Arab quarters in the towns. It is quite true they are for a large part thieves and scavengers. The most pathetic thing always is the children, since so many of them are so lovely despite their rags, their trachoma and the running sores which they invariably have. They are of such promise, and yet, like their elders, their future is just a life of dirt and disease. The innumerable "shoe-shine boys" that pester one are invariably bright and intelligent and could be of great use in the new world which is so much publicised. But if things continue as they are they will deteriorate, and valuable material will have been wasted.

For all this I blame the French. They have been in possession of Algeria now for over a hundred years. They have exploited the Arab and kept him down. I could find no trace of any attempt at social services even on the smallest scale. The French say the Arab likes to be dirty and that he does nothing to help himself. There is obviously a small grain of truth in this, but the French have magnified it beyond all proportion. Anyway, they have given the Arab little opportunity to help himself.

The country is wealthy, and the French have benefited enormously. They have taken a great deal out and put very little in. But what has caused the French to be frightened? Why are their bullying methods being strengthened? (The French always say the Arab has to be treated rough—"he doesn't understand any other way"—ironically only too true!) The coming of the British and Americans in force to Algeria has given the Arab his opportunity. He has made money. He has stolen arms and ammunition on a great scale. He has stolen goods (food and clothing particularly), which in the black market he has sold to the French at exorbitant prices. Money from the French to buy arms and material with which to rise against the French!

When the British and Americans go, the opportunity of the Arab will have come. The native population of Algeria will revolt—they hate the French—unless some concrete signs of long-overdue reforms are in evidence. It will take more than a generation to put the Algerian natives on a healthy footing. It is an immense task, but it can be done. It must be done. The Algerian French may want to keep the Arab down, they may dislike de Gaulle's announcements, but they must accept them. The Arab waits to see if they really mean anything.

IS HISTORY REPEATING ITSELF?

Despite the gloomy saying that the only lesson to be learnt from history is that men never learn from history, it may be useful to glance at what happened in the closing years of the last war and the opening years of the peace in order to help us avoid the same errors to-morrow.

On August 25th, 1917, The New Statesman published an anonymous article entitled "A World Famine." Actually, it was the work of Mr. Sidney Webb. The article argued that there was grave risk of the war being followed by unemployment, famine and revolutions. To avert this risk the extensive controls over importing and exporting, manufacture and distribution of raw materials and food, that had been established by the Allies during the war and linked up internationally through the various inter-Allied transport and economic boards should be enlarged at the Peace Conference by the inclusion of both ex-neutrals and ex-enemies, put under the League of Nations, and used for the purpose of reconstruction after the war. This policy was adopted by the British and Allied Labour and Socialist Parties and Trade Unions, and formed part of their programme for the League of Nations.

The Labour Movement pressed the matter so hard on the Government that a detailed plan was eventually prepared by the Foreign Office and submitted to the Peace Conference, with the argument that it aimed at tiding the world over the transition from war to peace and creating firm economic foundations for the League of Nations. It was in fact, in the words of the Foreign Office memorandum, "the inevitable corollary of the whole idea of a League of Nations as it is beginning to take form both in the United States and in this country."

The idea was defeated by the embattled forces of British, French and American Big Business, anxious to remove all controls and plunge into untrammelled private profit-making without delay. They were ably led by Mr. Herbert Hoover, big business man and fanatical believer in the sacred rights of private enterprise, who was then U.S. Secretary of State for Commerce, and his lieutenant Mr. Bernard M. Baruch, affectionately and admiringly known in the American business world as "The Wall Street Wolf." Mr. Baruch's letter of April 12th, 1919, to Lord Robert (now Viscount) Cecil, refusing the appointment of a commission to consider the matter, contains as its key sentence "the salvation of the world must rest upon the initiative of individuals." Lord Cecil wrote in reply:

> You think that without question the economic situation can be solved by individual initiative. It may be so, though my own opinion is to the contrary, and it is for that reason that I pressed for the summoning of a small expert committee, to which Colonel House agreed. It may be that the result of the enquiry will show that without American assistance on a large scale nothing can be done, and it may also be that America will decline to give that assistance. If she intends to take that attitude, forgive me for saying that she ought to take it quite openly and before the face of the world. Then we in Europe shall know the extent of the problem that faces us.

The other side of the medal is shown in a correspondence between Mr. Lloyd George and President Wilson. Mr. Lloyd George sent the President a financial scheme drawn up by Mr. (now Lord) Keynes for American co-operation in post-war reconstruction. It contained a comprehensive plan for rehabilitating European credit and for financing relief and reconstruction by large international loans linked up with reparation payment bonds to be issued by the Central Powers. In his covering letter Mr. Lloyd George observed that "in some quarters the hope is entertained that with the early removal of obstacles in the form of the blockade and similar measures to free international intercourse, private enterprise may be safely entrusted with the task of finding the solution." While professing his faith in the renewal of private enterprise as the main hope of salvation in the long run, Mr. Lloyd George took the view that, at any rate in the financial sphere,. "the problem of restoring Europe is certainly too great for private enterprise alone, and every delay puts this solution further out of court. . . . The more prostrate a country is and the nearer to Bolshevism, the more presumably it requires assistance. But the less likely is private enterprise to do it."

In his reply turning down the scheme President Wilson made the following points:

> You have suggested that we all address ourselves to the problem of helping to put Germany on her feet. But how can your experts or ours be expected to work out a *new* plan to furnish working capital to Germany, when we deliberately start out by taking away all Germany's *present* capital? How can anyone expect America to turn over to Germany in any considerable measure new working capital to take the place of that which the European nations have determined to take from her? Such questions would appear to answer themselves, but I cannot refrain from stating them, because they so essentially belong to a candid consideration of the whole difficult problem to which we are addressing ourselves, with as sincere a desire as that of our colleagues to reach a serviceable conclusion.

The results of the victory of the Big Business champions of decontrol in the name of liberty are graphically analysed in a monograph entitled *Europe's Overseas Needs*, 1919-20, *and How They Were Met*, published in 1943 by the Economic, Financial and Transit Department of the League of Nations Secretariat. As a result of the failure to preserve the Allied system for the joint purchase, distribution and transport of raw materials and foodstuffs for the reconstruction period and to extend its operation to cover the whole of Europe, says this publication, there was no international co-operation in reconstruction, although there was some in relief work. The acquisition of raw material was left almost entirely to the quite inadequate buying, bargaining and borrowing power of the individual countries. Prices soared, and, in the scramble for materials and markets, some countries enjoyed a boom while others experienced acute difficulty in restarting their production. This led to unemployment, the subsidising of exports, import restrictions and exchange control, depreciation and inflation, exchange dumping and general economic and social instability.

Eventually, when inflation led to threats of social upheavals, localised remedial action to stabilise currencies was taken, but only after irreparable harm had been done, both materially and psychologically. Burdened with external indebtedness and dreading a recurrence of inflation, the countries of Europe had not the powers, either of resistance or recuperation, to withstand the depression of the early Thirties.

Sir Arthur Salter, Director of the Economic and Financial section of the League of Nations Secretariat during the first ten years after the war, goes even further than the League monograph. In *World Trade and Its Future*, he concludes that post-war reconstruction achieved its objective, which was to rebuild the pre-war system, beginning with "the removal of State control and the establishment of conditions favourable to private enterprise." After the first ten years "success seemed almost complete and likely to be permanent." The pre-war system "with the one notable addition of the League of Nations" had been re-established.

> Then came the sudden and devastating collapse, in the economic life of the world, in its financial system, in parliamentary government, in the new structure of peaceful international relations. . . .

> It is necessary to emphasise the central feature to be observed in every sphere of disintegration. It was the old system that had been rebuilt; and this system proved in some respects unsuitable to the new conditions, and not strong enough to control the new forces. . . . This I believe to be the essential significance of the post-war period.

To-day there is a Gadarene drive, by big business Blimps masquerading as crusaders for freedom, to remove all economic controls at the end of the war. The Atlantic City UNRRA Conference showed a strong desire to confine international co-operation to relief measures and to conduct reconstruction as a series of separate national enterprises. The lineal descendants of the school that wanted simultaneously to ruin Germany and to extract vast reparations are clamouring to-day for stripping Germany of her heavy industries while at the same time demanding that Germany supply machine tools and manufactured goods to repair the vast damage wrought by her armies and her policies of spoliation. Those who wanted, in 1919, an unplanned, "Beggar My Neighbour" peace, based on propositions economically incompatible and giving scope only for a brief scramble for private profit before the deluge of a great slump, have found faithful imitators to-day.

K. ZILLIACUS

THE GOLDEN LEGEND

DOES the fact that the fiduciary issue has been bumped up to £1,100 million constitute an unpleasant reminder to the British public that its currency has virtually no backing? Has the general public ever realised that practically the whole of our gold reserve has gone up the spout? At the beginning of the war the Bank's gold was transferred to the dim coverts of the Exchange Equalisation Fund, and then on the good old authoritarian principle of what they don't know doesn't hurt' em it, along with the Fund's other holdings, travelled abroad under the name of Skinner. The Federal Reserve Board Bulletins up to the time of Pearl Harbour gave a good clue to its destination, but the Bulletin is not prescribed reading for the citizenry here. The Bank Return now shows £241,000 in gold coin and bullion to back a note issue of £1,000,000,000. Chicken-feed is a mild term for this: a City pigeon wouldn't deign to peck at it. An international championship has at last reverted to these shores. The American soap which claims a $99\frac{5}{8}$ per cent. purity, yields place to the British currency which is $99\frac{98}{100}$ per cent. pure faith. Valuable space in the vaults has been released for coke storage and I trust the Bank has taken sensible advantage of this. Incidentally has anyone noticed if a detachment of Guards still attends nightly to watch over the specie? This is just the sort of custom which is observed to the crack of doom regardless of the original purpose.

In the piping days of peace, the efflux of a couple of bars from the Bank sent ripples of apprehension through the country, and Ministers made great play with German envelopes once plastered with a million Marks of postage stamps. Is there any sign now of public mistrust in the currency? Why, there are kiddies growing up who have never seen a banana, a lighted street lamp or a flight from the currency. Bless your soul, it is a rare drunk or road casualty whose pockets do not yield three figures in notes to the police or hospital authorities. The British public must have lost weight on a wartime diet. There is no sensible evidence of this. It has padded out the hollows with bank notes. As for sophisticated persons like myself who know all about percentage cover, bullion content, standard of fineness and the other requisites of a sound currency, well, here I am writing an article in the hope of garnering a few more units of the paper trash.

This is all very well in wartime, it can be argued, but afterwards we shall have to do something about it. A £1,000 million note issue must have at least £250 million of gold behind it. How is this to be done? There is no secret about it. We can import £250 million of gold in exchange for £250 million of exports. The acquisition of gold is no different from the acquisition of tea, cotton, bananas or any other commodity in this respect. Now as far as I am concerned, include me out of this arrangement. I shall have had my bellyful of austerity by the end of this war. Regarding my household as an average of the 10 million households of the U.K., I am not prepared to work and forgo £25 of cigarettes, pineapple and other comestibles in order to give the Bank the opportunity of clearing out the coke, whitewashing the cellars and reloading with bullion. No hard feelings on my part; and I am agreeable to borrowing the stuff from the U.S.A. at 1 per cent., involving an annual charge of 5*s*. on my household for interest. But this is the limit to my contribution to the peace of mind of the banking world. If on top of that people come round to my door canvassing for the Indigent Central Bankers' Fund they will get their noses bitten off.

Still, bless their hearts, the kind-hearted British public will probably agree to absorb a goodly amount of the stuff in order to relieve the strain on the accommodation at Fort Knox and to spare their South African cousins the inconvenience of turning over from mining to peach-growing. In that case I submit that it is entitled to get the maximum satisfaction out of the arrangement. We have been compelled sharply to revise our estimates of the wisdom, or rather lack of wisdom, of the East. The *in partibus infidelium* tag doesn't trip so glibly when the Chinese are under discussion to-day, and Burma and Malaya have induced other questionings. Now when it comes to the use of the precious metals, the Oriental is inclined to ostentatious display. He goes in for golden temple bells and roofs, gem-studded idols and bangle-adorned womenfolk. This does make for colour and picturesqueness of the landscape, but we benighted Occidentals, who excavate gold and promptly rebury it, used to refer deprecatingly to the barbaric splendour of the East. Our religion constrains us to chant longingly for the sight of pearly gates and streets of shining gold, but the family jewels and plate stay in the safe deposit vaults to be checked once a generation by the executors. Even at a coronation, paste substitutes are freely employed. I have always felt a little uncomfortable about this aspect of the higher civilisation, and the climax came when I had to lecture before the war on the latest refinements in the currency policy of the Western world. The thing began to sound like a grotesque parody of a football broadcast. *The bullion market passes to the Bank of England! Over to the Exchange Equalisation Fund! Back to the bullion market! The commercial banks have got it! Yes! No! The Bank of France is cutting in. Oh boy, the Federal Reserve Board is coming up at a great pace! The market's up on its feet and is shouting like—I beg your pardon. They're over! They're over! No! Into touch. Square number eight.* All this without more than half a dozen officials ever getting a glimpse of the ball, I mean the gold. I had the uneasy feeling that behind the impassive face of the Chinese student the gleeful thought was revolving "This'll make 'em roar in Chungking." I was glad to hand over to a colleague and specialise in the good, old, honest-to-God straightforward, bread-and-butter racket of the holding company.

If therefore we are going to replenish our gold stock, I submit it should be done in the following form. On the first convenient Christmas morning after the Armistice our womenfolk will wake up to find the bedside shelf arrayed with gold bangles, bracelets, brooches or whatnots, while we menfolk stand around with complacent smirks on our dials. Imagine the delighted squeals: "But, darling, how lovely!" and then, after firm hands have been laid on the boodle, "You shouldn't have. You can't really afford it." Whereupon we shall look modestly down our noses and mutter diffidently "That's all right, old lady, I cut out the smoking and drink for a bit." And what we shall get away with after that! Ash on the carpet and three nights a week at the club while the girls run around chirping "Look what George has given me." And if the domestic atmosphere ever gets sultry the subject can be turned with a deft "By the way, old girl, I hope you've got that bangle in a safe place." Moreover, the whole thing could be put over with great *éclat: Age of chivalry returns. British men pay striking tribute to womenfolk.* While the discomfited males abroad spend their time in belatedly placating their wives we can be capturing the export markets.

From that point on, I am prepared to leave the future disposition of gold to the ladies. If, as I suspect, many of them begin to trade in for fur coats, I shall regard this as sensible behaviour. After all, the essential use of the stuff is as a war-chest, and the populace will be chivvied into surrendering its holdings as soon as hostilities begin. But on the next occasion there may not be time or opportunity to ship it abroad and bring back creature comforts in its place. A fur coat on the back is worth two tons of potential spam overseas. In any case, I suggest the men keep out of it altogether.

G. L. SCHWARTZ

SUNSET OVER A NINE DAYS' WONDER

ON the way from an airfield in that country of bottomless lakes, spruce trees and talk of fishing, I saw the signpost which said "To Callender." With the nostalgia of an old song-hit that fabulous story nudged me, and I interrupted the good trout-talk to say: "Not *the* Callender?"

"Oh, yes," said the pilot who didn't mind being stationed here because of the fishing. "Callender of the five children. Quints and all that. We used to see that doctor—what'sisname—Dafoe, dear old chap, when he was alive. Now this lake here. . ."

The rim of road curved to the water and the regal colours of autumn were painted upon the hillside above. But like the old song-hit the fabulous story ran in my brain, that memorial of human virtuosity, of commercialism, publicity, curiosity, maternal talent and medical skill. To be in juxtaposition with that nine days' wonder of all the pre-war world's newsfronts was sufficiently compelling. To drive into the big town of that province, however, along a main street where the gold-rush shacks shyly leaned against neon-lighted concrete and to read among the news-flashes outside the newspaper office that a Japanese woman had just given birth to quintuplets was a definite call to the Callender road.

It is a good road alongside a lake the wooded fringes of which bear, like warts and pimples, a succession of fancy summer-houses, Moulin-Rouge refreshment rooms, cottages and inns fancied or dreamed-up by men whose subconscious furniture is a movie-set. We drove fast because the pilot who fished knew the road and we feared losing the light at Callender.

Soon we came to a cross-roads by an inn and a white finger to the left pointed to "Dafoe Hospital." We turned into a straight uphill road ironed out by thousands of wide-eyed sightseers from all over the world, from Wendell Willkie to Mrs. Marsden-Ackerley in her Rolls-Royce. That road has suspense. It is just long enough and solitary enough to make you wonder if you are going right; it is just straight enough and hilly enough to encourage you on to the next rise. We scorched, from the modest house in Callender where they have just taken down the brass plate of the late saintly Dr. Dafoe to the first signs of the magic baby settlement—telling ourselves, as I suppose so many thousands have told each other, that the doctor must have traversed it once in as great a hurry.

An establishment on the left of the road called "Baby-View" slowed us down. It is a holiday settlement where you may rent cabins and park your automobile for days at a time enjoying the prospect of the Five World's Most Wonderful Children. It looks closed. It looks rather funny, too, standing in the evening light against virgin bush flaming with the coming of autumn.

Up the road on the right is a modest farm, wood-built, trimmed with a verandah and a few trees—a slightly dilapidated property. Our pilot explains that this is the actual birthplace where the quintuplets were delivered to the hard-working farming family of Dionne. Unlike Shakespeare's birthplace, it is labelled "Private," and is not drawing a crowd.

We enter now upon a plaza of hard surface, the centre of the Quint industry. Here is the new home of the Dionne family, a pleasant house, clean and bright where the rest of the children who are not wonders except by relationship have their home. Beyond is a very fine large hospital-like building which would do justice to any city as a public institution. This, we have heard, is to be the Quint's new home. Their present establishment fitted with galleries of windows into which the curious may look without the five wonders seeing them in return lies behind stout gates upon our side of the plaza. It also is a fine modern building, more than worthy of its great purpose.

We drive up to the car park for five thousand automobiles. Our brakes squeak and our slamming doors are loud in the presence of a splendid sunset. The lights go on in the rooms of the quintuplets. There is not a human being in sight.

Mourning for the old pageantry of wonder, for the old news-fronts, like the nostalgic song-hits, I stroll over to the big shop advertised as kept by Madame Legros, "Aunt and Midwife of the Quintuplets." It is closed. The paint upon it is weathered. Maybe it is the evening light which makes it a trifle shabby. A great wooden clock above advertises times for the "next showing of the babies." The hands look as if they may never move again—for the babies must be something like six.

Our pilot is a little disappointed by the solitariness which seems to my unaccustomed eyes so soothing. "There used to be six parking attendants," he murmurs apologetically. "At least, let's talk to the night watchman."

At his hutch by the entrance to the lighted windows where the magic children presumably are having their suppers, we pause unchallenged. Between the locked gates and the sunset no single soul is in sight. Glancing across to the public rest rooms labelled Ladies and Gents, desolate, abandoned, sombre with neglect, we retract from the nine days' wonder in its hygienic, comfortable wilderness, and we pile in the car again for the Callender crossroads beneath the purple hills.

At the inn, French and English Canadian voices discussing Russia with great passion, and the landlord, sighing over his photographs of Wendell Willkie and other celebrities, mentions the fact that he is really a professional singer. A customer explains that business is "all to hell." "What with gas shortage and tyre shortage, the children business had to pack up. . . . And there it is. Some of us can't sell, some of us can't stay put—and them children's not been on show for a year."

We can see them by applying to their business manager in the local town perhaps. I suggest that perhaps they have such a great future that we shall see them again in happier days when there are gas and tyres. I tell them how I treasure the sight of that solitary sunset upon the scene of such great events. I am told a long pointless story about a man who was crowned by a bottle.

John Pudney

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HOAREY STORY

Franco is a fascist,
Franco is a cheat,
Spain has put a time-bomb
Under Franco's seat;
Franco fights the people,
Franco beats the Crown,
Franco trusts to Britain
Not to let him down.

Neutral, fascist Franco
On Britain's aid depends—
Franco is ungrateful
To faithful British friends.
Spaniards in the *Wehrmacht*,
Nazis in Tangier—
Britain sends a protest,
Franco doesn't hear.

British friends of Franco
Trust his Royal Duke—
Whitehall sends a protest,
Franco cocks a snook.
While the aid of Britain
Tightens Franco's clutch
Some may think that Britain
Doth protest too much.

Franco backs the Axis,
We express regret,
Eden sends a warning,
(Alba bears the threat).
Franco puts his time-bombs
On a British ship . . .
Foreign Office protests
Are Franco's comic strip.

No damned flies on Franco,
No damned flies on Hoare,
Protests and offences
They mutually ignore.
Franco's doing nicely
Spanish hopes are sunk
While the British lion
Protects the fascist———Excellentisimo Señor de Francisco Franco, Jéfe del Estado, Generalisimo de los Ejércitos.

Sagittarius

THE MOVIES

"The Nazis Strike," at Studio One.
"Johnny Vagabond," at London Pavilion.

Revivals of all sorts are going on. Olivier joins the Brontë family, in *Wuthering Heights*; there is Charles Laughton, in the days before he became lovable, bawling from the stern as Captain Bligh of "The Bounty"; and *Un Carnet de Bal*, seen so many times before, can be seen again at Studio One. Its merits and faults remain; the sentimental journey it sets out to explore is artificial as ever, but the episodes—if one can support the interviewing element—still dazzle. Rosay as the mother who has gone quietly mad rather than admit her son's suicide, Louis Jouvet as the cynical proprietor of a *boite de nuit*, Pierre Blanchard in the most frightful of Mediterranean settings (there is an unequalled clinical horror in these sequences): perhaps it will all bear seeing again, if you haven't yet exhausted your interest in this film. The excuse for a revisit to Duvivier is provided by another film in the programme, the second of Frank Capra's series of seven films under the general title, *Why We Fight*. The present instalment, boosted by Mr. Churchill, begins with Germany rearming and Hitler dreaming geo-politics, and takes us through the first shocking stages of his *Drang Nach Osten*. Harshly dramatic the clang of events, and from these brilliantly pieced-together newsreels particular shots drill down on the nerve. Munich: no crook's parlour ever staged a shadier-looking group; see, especially, the moth-eaten Daladier slink in. The rape of Poland: figures and diagrams, as well as newsreels, give a more precise and horrifying picture of this invasion than any yet screened.

In *The Nazis Strike*, as in the others of this series already shown—numbers one and three—the economical and imaginative use of newsreels provides a new standard for film journalism. There is also, at Studio One, a new Silly Symphony—new, at any rate, to me—*Merbabies*: pretty and very funny with its subaqueous circus of sea-horses and elephant-whales.

If you want a nice old-fashioned, warm-hearted story, with Mr. Cagney at his most golden, there is *Johnny Vagabond*. Far from the war this, and from the world altogether. Only tramps, it seems, know real happiness, and Mr. Cagney is a tramp at the beginning and resumes his vagabondage at the end. In between (this in the 1900's) he so far forgets himself as to work for a nice old lady (Grace George) who, with her newspaper, is trying to clean up the town. Everyone in the film is nice except the politician-racketeers, and when they're beaten even they behave very nicely, too. This is a lively, sentimental film, with some good character acting, which one can't help enjoying.

William Whitebait

CENSORSHIP REGULATIONS allow readers to post this paper to any part of the British Empire (excepting Eire and Northern Ireland) and to any country of the American Continent (excepting dependencies of enemy-occupied countries) but readers are advised to consult a Post Office or a newsagent before attempting to post elsewhere.

Correspondence

POLITICAL TRENDS

Sir,—Your kindly references to my *Political Quarterly* study of election possibilities incite me to add a few notes bringing the picture up to date, for my article was necessarily written a while ago.

1. The leftish trend in many countries holding 1943 elections, which is analysed in my *Political Quarterly* elections, now appears more clearly in other countries where elections are still impossible. In Yugoslavia unmistakably; in Greece; in France confusedly; and in Spain growingly; and in Italy, where Communism is emerging as a strong force, too. The prestige of Russia is an important factor throughout Europe as well as in the Dominions.

2. Skipton confirms a trend which I traced back some years. And Miss Balfour should, on the basis of our North Country polling studies, have won Darwen if she had asked for a 9 p.m. voting extension. These results correspond with great war successes and peak popularity for the P.M., who lends his full support to Government candidates.

3. The Tory Reformers have (since I wrote) emerged as primarily preoccupied with perpetuating the Coalition. This, from young, able M.P.s, is a striking indication.

4. Yet the assumptions of inevitable Conservative election success under Churchill continue, and even increase—e.g. this week, *Sunday Times* political correspondent; A. J. Cummings, in *News Chronicle*; while J. L. Garvin in *Sunday Express* actually foresees a mere plebescite for the P.M. The idea that one man can carry a whole party and hundreds of individual candidates does little credit to the common sense of an electorate much re-educated by the events of six years past. It is also important to recognise that Mr. Churchill does not yet stand in the public eye as *Conservative* leader, but as *Coalition Chief*, with a background of independence and non-party criticism. If and when he changes this position, he will change popular attitudes too.

On the objective evidence, at present it seems that, for worse or for better, the Conservative Party, even led by Mr. Churchill, will have difficulty in winning, unless they replace many current candidates and policies by the young, lively and socially conscious, and unless their opponents let the chance go through disunity, vacillation, timidity, near-sight, and an old-fashioned approach.

What amazes me is that so few see the present set-up realistically. Surely it does not need even my humble statistics? It only needs a little attentive listening in pub and bus, NAAFI, ABCA and ABC.

Tom Harrisson

B.B.C.

Sir,—Mr. Crossman divides wireless listening into "two sharply distinguished species"—pleasant background noises to some other activity and serious listening. He thinks the two programmes now provided should be arranged to cater respectively for these "needs" without poaching on each other's preserves.

As regards the programmes themselves, I suggest that High Brow and Low Brow indicate the appropriate distinction, which could be introduced without altering the present titles of Home and Forces, although these are far from satisfactory. The wireless has enabled an immense number of people to acquire a real love of classical music, particularly orchestral, where previously they were completely ignorant. The crowds that now flock to orchestral concerts are proof of this. For myself (one of the recruits to the army of music-lovers), I scan the *Radio Times* week by week searching for good programmes and account it fortunate if I find even two. This week (on Jan. 22nd, at 2.15 p.m.) there is a concert which comprises the Overture "Midsummer Night's Dream," the Symphony from the New World, the Emperor Concerto and the Overture to "The Meistersingers." This is magnificent, but rare. And yet there is not the slightest reason why two or three such concerts should not be given every week of the year. There are also gramophone concerts which might with advantage be greatly extended. Is it in fact too much to ask that by one method or the other there should be provided two good concerts daily? Another feature which would stand a great deal of developing is the instruction and delightful explanatory talks on music by such men as Alec Robertson, Scott Goddard and Spike Hughes.

Now that the wireless has brought first-class music to the fireside, it is fantastic and continuously exasperating to be given so little of it and that so often has one to rush to the machine and turn the beastly thing off.

CLIVE GARCIA

The Army and Navy Club.

SIR,—In his second article on the B.B.C. programmes, Mr. Crossman appears to be going altogether too far when he writes that in the case of religious worship broadcasting is positively harmful. If broadcasting is the means of keeping away from church the type of Christian who prefers his hot fire and tea, it may well be argued that good service is done both to the Church itself and the community at large.

Apart from this, Mr. Crossman surely forgets the case of the old people and the sick. Quite unable to reach any place of worship they appreciate the substitute enormously. Balancing this good against the possible harm it seems that one scale is heavily weighted.

T. D. ROBERTS

119 Wigorn Road, Smethwick.

MR. HUDSON AND THE FARMERS

SIR,—Your special correspondent's article on Mr. Hudson and the farmers is remarkable for its mixture of emotionalism, distortion of fact and downright untruth. To bring up against the farmer his having lived at home while pursuing his essential work, a privilege that the vast majority of other war-workers enjoy, is mere hysteria.

To quote 27*s.* 6*d.* as the price of barley when this figure is the maximum price given only for the best malting barley and to fail to mention that the other barley is only 14*s.* 6*d.*, is hardly fair tactics. To quote 19*s.* 6*d.* as the price of wheat when the price is only 15*s.* is simply a lie. Most of the figures in the article are similarly worthless. Your correspondent, conveniently for himself, ignores that Mr. Hudson's pledge first given in 1940, was reaffirmed in 1942. One would have thought that had the farmers indeed been making excessive profits two years would have been enough time for Mr. Hudson to find this out.

The truth is, of course, that the small farmer—and 80 per cent of farmers hold not more than 100 acres—is earning less than the average farm labourer who gets from 65*s.* to 90*s.* I can vouch for this from my own experience and from that of other small farmers I know. It is confirmed by Mr. Clement Davies, M.P., who recently made an enquiry into the earnings of farmers in Wales. His comment was "a form of slavery." The figures given by a Midland Accountant in the *Times* last week also confirm my estimate. In conclusion, I challenge your correspondent to produce figures of farm incomes from authentic sources such as I quote. One cannot accept figures derived, on your correspondent's own confession, from gossip in clubs, pubs and buses.

Hailstone Farm,
Blockley, Glos.

JEAN SAVERY

[Our correspondent replies: "The writer of this letter is wrong on every point. (1) The amount of non-malting barley sold is negligible. (2) The writer has forgotten the £4 an acre wheat subsidy, which brings the effective price up to 19*s.* 6*d.* (3) There are black spots, e.g., the Nottingham area referred to by the Midland Accountant in his letter to the *Times*, where the small farmer may earn no more than Mr. Savery says. Some such areas have already received special aid from the Ministry. The general picture of English farming, even where the farms are small, is prosperous. I could quote many figures in support of this statement, but Mr. Savery is unlikely to be convinced until the Minister thinks fit to disclose the comprehensive figures which he is believed to possess."—ED. *N.S. & N.*]

EDUCATION BILL

SIR,—Is the Christian religion, after all these centuries of prestige and privilege, to fall back on the secular support of the State to guarantee it a hearing? Are School Prayers to be conducted under the compulsory auspices of the Government? Are members of the teaching profession—so urgently in need of recruits—to feel that promotion to its leading positions is threatened with religious tests? Such are the implications of Mr. Butler's proposals for religious instruction, and for this reason all four professional associations representing the heads and assistants in secondary schools have pronounced against the principle of compulsion.

"Permissive legislation is the character of a free people. It is easy to adopt compulsory legislation when you have to deal with those who only exist to obey. But in a free country, and especially in a country like England, you must trust to persuasion and example as the two great elements if you wish to effect any considerable changes in the manners of the people." Surely we have not changed so grievously for the worse as not to recognise in Disraeli's words the authentic voice of the true national temper.

Are we to assume that Christian persuasion and example no longer prevail? And, if so, who has persuaded Mr. Butler that compulsion will succeed? Instead of revitalising religion it may very well do little more than secure the façade behind and beneath which the foundations may crumble. It will give a new lease of life to those conditions of sterile security which will eventually destroy the very thing that Mr. Butler is anxious to preserve.

It is no defence to say that "the old-established rights of conscience" are to be preserved. Is it not a fact that this measure is designed to forbid educationists, no matter how devoted and skilful, to organise themselves into groups as schools for the teaching of children with the aid of the State, unless they are prepared to put before the children an ultimate interpretation of life presentable in terms of a religious formula? What is the evidence that such is the will of the country? This is surely no way to combat what is loosely described as secularism. It is even contrary to the principle of toleration recently laid down by the Archbishop of Canterbury, who has recently said in his essay: *What Christians Stand For in the Secular World*: "It would be recognised that men can live at peace with one another only if each individual *and each group* renounces the claim to have the final and decisive word." The italics are mine. To throw secularism on the resources of private enterprise by adopting the policy of "You pray and we'll pay" is to introduce an economic sanction into a sphere where its results have so often

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been observed with regret by the true lovers of religion. There are better ways of giving religion a more defined place in the life of the schools than by starving the secularists into surrender. But the gap between Pentecost and Whitehall will have to be reduced.

J. C. **Dent**, Headmaster

Westminster City School.

Sir,—There is a serious error of fact in your comments this week on Mr. Butler's failure to propose abolition of fees in all schools receiving aid from public funds. You state that on this issue "Mr. Butler can, of course, seek shelter behind the Fleming Committee, which has not yet presented its report." But at Mr. Butler's request, made in November, 1942, the Fleming Committee prepared a special report on this specific issue, and their findings were published in March, 1943. The majority report, signed by 11 out of the 18 members of the Committee, recommended the abolition of tuition fees in all grant-aided secondary schools, including direct grant schools. Mr. Butler cannot, therefore, seek shelter behind the Fleming Committee on this issue, though he has still to receive their recommendations on the closer association of the public schools with the general educational system. His failure to include in the Bill provision for the abolition of fees in all types of grant-aided secondary schools is therefore much more significant than your erroneous statement would suggest—he has deliberately chosen to ignore the recommendations of the majority on the issue which they considered at his request.

W. A. **Claydon**, Headmaster

Maidstone Grammar School.

[It is true that the Fleming Committee, by a majority, recommended the abolition of fees in all schools receiving State aid, but the Committee pointed out that it was difficult to disentangle this issue from other issues on which it had to report later. Accordingly, on this point its report seems to have been officially regarded as tentative and interim.—Ed., *N.S. & N.*]

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Sir,—Mr. Raymond Mortimer's penetrating review of *A Victorian School* betrayed certain qualms about the present condition of Wellington College; he noted, pointedly, that no mention had been made of its present headmaster, and hinted at a possible attempt to rebuild that humpty-dumpty array of values of character-strafing from which Mr. Longden had rescued it. I can confirm his suspicions. Agreeing with Mr. Mortimer about Mr. Talboys's urbanity, one may still find an insufficiency in his polite humanism. For he discerns the real tradition of the school in the Army Side. It is this tradition that has once again prevailed since Robert Longden's death. The authorities, however, do not show Mr. Talboys's wide intelligence, and if I suggested that they had a preference for mediocrity they would probably take the accusation as a compliment. Backed by the polite militarism of Mr. Talboys and the ruthless militarism of the present hour, it is hardly surprising that intelligence should be recognised only as an attribute of the will, never as the genius of a personality. One may add that two exceptional masters of the high type praised by Mr. Mortimer have recently left Wellington, and that the free intercourse between Houses, for which Mr. Talboys so rightly hopes, is still extremely limited. Longden's work proceeded from the genius of personality; the bombs that destroyed his have made of that work a legend.

I. **Murray** (Old Wellingtonian)

King's College,
Cambridge.

CARL MIERENDORFF

Sir,—The news of the tragic death of Dr. Carl Mierendorff during the Leipzig raid of December 4, 1943, has come as a very painful shock to his friends in this country. His disappearance is the more regrettable, as he was one of the very few German Socialist leaders who did not regard the coming to power of Hitler as an inevitable catastrophe. As early as March, 1929, he stressed the growing danger of National Socialism as the direct consequence of economic distress on the one hand and of the unflinching endeavour of all the reactionary forces in Germany to regain power, on the other. In *Sozialistische Monatshefte* and *Die Gesellschaft* he published remarkable articles on the constitutional weaknesses of the Weimar Republic, urging especially the necessity for a new electoral system, pleaded for extensive co-operation between Germany and France and defended wholeheartedly the idea of European federation.

Mierendorff's popularity in his own constituency (Hesse-Darmstadt) spread swiftly over the whole of Germany after his election to the Reichstag in September, 1930. Together with his Russian friend, Professor Tschachotin, he became the creator of entirely new propaganda methods based on the symbolism of the three arrows. After the general elections of March 5th, 1933, his life was continually in danger, but he managed to elude the S.S. and Gestapo until June 13th, when he was arrested in Frankfurt on the Main. Before May 10th, when the Social Democratic group of the Reichstag voted for Hitler's "peace policy," Mierendorff had worked out a resolution condemning the numerous crimes already committed in Germany by Hitler's S.A. and S.S. But with few exceptions the parliamentary group refused to endorse it.

During his five years of detention in the concentration camps of Osthofen, Börgermoor and Lichtenburg "Carlo" never appeared to be discouraged or in despair. Numerous people who have met him have acknowledged his strength of character and helpful comradeship. The time has not yet come when we can give details of his extremely brave feats during and after imprisonment. However, he was an uncompromising enemy of National Socialism and a faithful ally inside Germany. His loss is irreparable, his example highly encouraging.

Artur Egon Bratu

LEADERSHIP

Sir,—This is alarming, this picture that Alfred Edwards has drawn for us of the members of the Parliamentary Labour Party, each modestly declining nomination in a paralysis of blushing confusion, horrified at C. R. Attlee's daring "appeal to members to break this convention and in future to go to a vote." No wonder Common Wealth has stepped forward to take charge!

Like Critic, Alfred Edwards hastens to eulogise Attlee's "many good qualities" and regrets his lack of "that indefinable thing, leadership."

He seems to yearn for some kind of Labour "Winston Churchill." But is not that a contradiction in terms? Is there not an essential difference between Socialist leadership and Tory leadership? Does not the record of European politics over the last ten years provide some food for thought along this line? Does Alfred Edwards not agree that the recent history of the Labour Party would seem to suggest that the flamboyant personality, the *leader* type, almost inevitably carries with it the seed of its own corruption?

Did Arthur Henderson possess "that indefinable thing, leadership"? Certainly not in the sense that Critic and Alfred Edwards conceive it. Yet he was admittedly the greatest Foreign Secretary that Britain has ever had. Without experience in diplomacy and, in spite of serious physical and political handicaps, he attained his leadership in world affairs in two short years. Was he not, in 1932, when out of office and not even a delegate to Geneva, chairman of the Disarmament Conference, and did not the nations insist on his retention of that leadership, despite the machinations of Britain's 1931 National Government?

Wherein lay Arthur Henderson's greatness as a leader? Surely in his simple, straightforward sincerity and his determination to translate his ideals into reality.

Glasgow. **James Walker**

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BOOKS IN GENERAL

> "He counted on a certain repugnance in those who most admired him, as men of his disposition count on the help of a certain instinctive dislike in those of whom they are most anxious to make themselves masters."

So wrote Arthur Symons in an acute preface to a collection of Prosper Mérimée's stories. Repugnance certainly disturbs our admiration of them; indeed, between Mérimée and the reader one might say that repugnances are exchanged like the names of seconds in a duel. We open *Colomba* or *Mateo Falcone* with the feeling that it is sunrise, that presently our infinitely accomplished adversary will come coolly through the woods and in a couple of minutes put a bullet through our lungs. We shall have died for God knows what, though Mérimée himself will suggest that our fate was an indifferent flash of the icy diamond of human life and passion. For Mérimée life is a campaign.

For us who have two wards in our blood such a writer has a peculiar interest. He can count on our repugnance and our attraction still. As a writer of *nouvelles* he is, without question, a master; and in stories of action or, perhaps one should say, in stories of the active and conscious man, he is inhumanly supreme. "I have spent my nights lately writing for posterity," he wrote in the *Lettres à Une Inconnue*. It is true. As bodies are preserved endlessly in ice, or the fly for ever printed flawlessly in amber, his stories appear new to the minds of every generation, so we cannot imagine a time when *Carmen* is forgotten or *Colomba* unreadable. The garments of the great encumber them; it is an effort to get at and read so many of the overwhelming figures of literature. But Mérimée remains crystalline, exact, apparent. The interesting thing is his refusal to be great. I mean his refusal to be a great man in the histrionic manner of the nineteenth century. Where his contemporaries in France and England seem to have gone to the wig-makers to dress for the character part of prophet, thinker and visionary, and to prepare the long oration of their careers, Mérimée steps back. Where they are positive and aggressive, he is negative and critical. They, in the manner of the century, are going to be great men. Their role and their audience will be everything to them. But when we look at Mérimée it appears to us that the sight of so many vibrant egotisms, warming up their engines and preparing to take off with a roar, must have produced in him a perverse decision, a decision without modesty, to stay isolated on the ground. And we know that it was his singular aim not to be a great man, but to be a scholar and a gentleman—an English gentleman, of all things, as romantic Frenchmen conceive that character to be. In other words, Mérimée was just as much an actor, just as much an heir of the Romantics and just as much a prophet, I think, as the rest of his contemporaries. He was simply the reverse of the medal. Like Stendhal, he discloses that the other side of Romanticism is the quest for personal power and for a primitive justification of it. He is not an aristocrat who inherits power in some sense as a trust; he is a middle-class man, the servant of aristocrats, who becomes the libertine of the will to power in human beings, pursuing it, inciting it, probing it, and in the story of *Colomba* exalting it. The themes of *Carmen*, of *Tamango*, of his superb historical novel, the *Chronicle of Charles IX*, of *Mateo Falcone* and even of that ironical little comedy of manners *L'Abbé Aubain*, are all alike in this respect: they are ruthless private wars, his people are goaded by pride or vanity to seek dominion. And when one side or the other has won, or when both have destroyed each other—what is left? For people whose lives play such a tune, Mérimée is too honest an artist and too clear minded to suggest that anything can be left but the emptiness of conquest. A shocking laugh there may be, like Colomba's derision when she sits back well-fed by her revenge; but in general Mérimée leaves us abruptly and we see an empty stage where pity cannot tread. For pity has not been born.

In this attitude of mind Mérimée was prophetic. He foreshadowed one kind of writer who would succeed the prophets. His critical intelligence, the clear ring of an intellect unsheathed from the heart, evokes an echo in ourselves. He is the scholar, the artist, the poet of insensibility. He is—one hardly likes to breathe the suggestion—tough. The visions, the sentiment, the complacencies of the nineteenth century delude; Mérimée encases his heart, prepares to repel by a superb display of strategy and marksmanship, and declares that the aim of man must be a self-control so established, a mistrust so masked, that he can never be duped. That decision of his not to be duped is famous. The word recalls a fashionable contemporary word: disabused.

And yet how refreshing Mérimée is! What brilliant uses may be made of an arrested development! The shock does not come, after all, until the ends of his stories: when the negro Tamango's broken glory fades into a Governor's anecdote, or when Carmen's death is merely a gloss on the customs of the gypsies. And that final shock is wiped out by the memory of the first shock we get when we begin a new story; the shock of pleasure and exhilaration in something new and strange. Mérimée is never boring. He writes like a gifted raconteur who is nonchalant, entirely at ease, but always alert in the presence of his circle. A bore has been defined as a man who tells you everything, and Mérimée never falls into that trap. He rewrote *Colomba* sixteen times to be sure of avoiding it. His economy of narrative is native to his guarded and scholarly mind. One may resent a curtness which was the fruit of mistrust, and one may add that the man who is not duped has a fundamentally tiresome attitude to life; but the economy of Mérimée has another root. It lies in his rare gift of order, which I take to be the first essential of good narrative. It is Mérimée's gift of order which enables him to place his scenes, as Turgenev and Pushkin did, briefly but infallibly before our eyes; to know, in *Colomba*, for example, how much of Corsica to describe, how far to dilate on local custom, how far to build up his anecdotes about the vendetta until the main vendetta of the story looms over us like an iron cloud, impassable and momentous on a mountain road. A great part of the pleasure of reading his stories comes from our awareness of their construction. At each phrase we are conscious of being set free from the irrelevances by which other writers mystify the reader, and of being directed by a mind that knows how to eliminate. One of the many difficulties the novelist has is to discern situation clearly; and whatever Mérimée may lose by his gift of isolating certain elements of character, he gains by the clarification of issues. So that we are able in *Colomba* simultaneously to hold in the mind many contrary things. We watch Colomba's will to revenge working on her brother's mind, but we do not lose sight of the civilisation he has, or the difficult nervous English girl he has left in Ajaccio. Even at the crisis of the book, when Colomba's conspiracy breaks and murder, somehow and somewhere, is inevitable, we never lose sight of the sunlight and the fog on the maquis and of the chattering Colonel and his daughter ambling cheerfully towards the awful hour when—as the bandit says—there will be fresh meat for sale in the town. Mérimée, of course, gets his effect by a remarkable prose style which deliberately lowered the emotional temperature in order to heighten the intellectual excitement. He excels by his skill at rendering the depths by keeping to the surface, by attending to the beguiling and untrustworthy smile (?) of life. His own emotions abstain from the narrative and, as I said before, we are free—that sense of freedom is the great gift of the Romantic tradition. With him we are free, also, of the Romantic burden. And even at the end, when the shock comes, as it always does in Mérimée, when we see him going too far and Colomba jeering at the broken father whose sons have been murdered, we are left reluctantly admiring the wicked perfection of the scene, the savagery of the irony. In the same way the end of Tamango is perfect.

In their dissociation of power and energy and pride from the rest of life, Stendhal and Mérimée are prophetic of Fascism. And Mérimée added a predeliction for primitive types. He is saved from the complete accusation by his scholarship and by his detachment. Mérimée does not desire to return to the primitive or to a world without mercy. He declined to have an organic conception of history. He was an anthropologist, not a mystic. Even his Byronism was moderated to the temper of what became a gentleman. He has much in common with Pushkin, whom he translated, a harder, frozen Pushkin always on guard. His mind was sceptical. There is a clear statement of his scepticism in his historical novel *The Chronicle of Charles IX* where he extracts the utmost irony out of the religious wars and the massacres of St. Bartholomew and detaches himself from the tale half-way through in order to explain his method of writing history to the reader. "This is not the last time brothers will kill each other in France," says the dying convert to his Huguenot brother; and Mérimée excels in describing the ambiguities of conscience in an age when professions of faith do violence to the soul. This novel set out to debunk the laden and stolid histories of Sir Walter Scott, and it reads as if it were written, not in the first half of the nineteenth century, but in the last twenty years. There is a succession of incomparable scenes, and there is no dead wood. Again, our pleasure is a double one; we are watching the building of the characters and the story while we are borne along by it. And again we are struck by another aspect of Mérimée which brings him close to us: what he passes off as his belief in anecdote is really his perfunctory name for documentation. Unfeeling he may be, but he can reconstruct an environment, a period, the corner of a battlefield, a gaming table, a Corsican hut or a house of rendezvous in Seville with a fidelity to their normal condition which many a more profuse and human writer has failed to achieve. He has the patience, the grace, the exactitude if he has also the perfunctoriness of the amateur. A writer might learn his art from him and dread the perfection he had learned.

V. S. PRITCHETT

NEWMAN ON OPERA

Opera Nights. By ERNEST NEWMAN. *Putnam.* 35*s.*

I have been told that George Moore liked to startle the company by expressing a boundless admiration for the prose of Newman. When reminded of the exceedingly disagreeable things that he had said about the Cardinal's style in *Hail and Farewell*, he would airily reply: "My dear sir, I do not refer to the Cardinal, than whom no one has written more abominably. I refer to the musical critic."

Apocryphal no doubt, the story is none the less *ben trovato*. Many who have read their Newman Sunday in, Sunday out, for twenty years or more feel that his easy, urbane, persuasive style is too generally taken for granted. There are, I know, musicians who contend that his criticism suffers from a Wagner-fixation, or—more generally—a fixation upon the nineteenth century, to the detriment of the twentieth and the eighteenth. But do they realise for how many thousands Mr. Newman has put not only musical criticism, but music itself, on the map? His manner of writing, free from jargon and reflecting the content of a well-read and logical mind, attracts especially those professional and literary men who are inclined to regard music as a mystery, at once above and below their proper sphere—splendid and majestical, no doubt, but inspiring in its hierophants a vast amount of high-falutin and clap-trap. Such listeners, a most desirable body of recruits, feel when they come across Mr. Newman's writings that sanity and wit are not after all incompatible with musical criticism. The range of his scholarship is enormous, and it is a curious comment on the way we manage things that there is not a single article from his pen either in *Grove* or in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

Of recent years Mr. Newman has indeed begun to appear somewhat bogged in the Pripet Marshes of Wagneriana. He had already published four separate volumes on that inexhaustible subject when he undertook the enormous labour of sifting anew the entire corpus of material (the most extensive, perhaps, that any artist has ever left behind him) in order to produce what looks like becoming one of the classical biographies of our time. This work, like *The Ring*, has grown in the course of composition, and is now, I believe, intended to form a tetralogy, of which two parts have so far appeared. And just as the composer left his young Siegfried in the depths of the forest while he polished off those two trifles *Tristan* and *Die Meistersinger*, so, in the heat of the struggle, the biographer has paused to refresh himself, and incidentally his public, by the production of this charming parergon on opera.

It is not, however, a slight work; its 628 pages contain plot and music analyses, supported by a mass of miscellaneous information, of twenty-nine operas. Let me say at once that, enjoyable as every chapter is, I am at a loss to understand the principle on which these operas have been selected. Printed in no particular order, they range in date from *Orfeo* to *Wozzeck*, and in familiarity from *Cavalleria Rusticana* to *La Juive*. One might have expected either an attempt to be comprehensive and include everything well known, or alternatively a frank reliance on the author's individual fancy. *Opera Nights* does a little in both lines. Those grubby twins, *Cav* and *Pag*, put in an appearance, neatly brushed and pinafored and reflecting the greatest credit on Nurse Newman for their turn-out, but remaining none the less the same noisy and unprepossessing infants as before. On the other hand, to our lasting advantage, long essays, with a copious use of music type, are devoted to some works for which the author evidently feels an especial affection. Among these the 40-page paper on *Les Troyens* is outstanding, and arouses in the reader the keenest longing to hear an adequate performance of that masterpiece; scarcely less valuable are the chapters on *Elektra* and *Der Rosenkavalier*. Wagner is wholly excluded, but we detect a particular sympathy in the treatment (among others) of *The Barber of Baghdad*, *Manon*, *Pelléas et Mélisande* and *Die Fledermaus*. The Russians, too—*Boris Godunov*, *Prince Igor*, *Eugen Onegin*, *Coq d'Or*—are handsomely treated. Then there is a category of operas which arouse in the writer not admiration so much as amusement and curiosity, and provoke some of his most entertaining sallies; among these are *Lakmé*, *Thaïs* and *Les Huguenots*. "Both Scribe and Meyerbeer," he remarks of the last-named, "were perhaps born a century too soon; in these days they would have found the ideal sphere for the exhibition of their peculiar talents in Hollywood."

Mozart gets two entries: *The Seraglio* (admirably done) and *Così fan tutte*. The latter strikes me as the only heavy-handed chapter in the volume, and provides plenty of ammunition to those musicians who claim that Mr. Newman is imperfectly at home in the eighteenth century. He does, one must admit, seem a trifle insensitive to the peculiar fascination of this lovely little work; the objections which he makes to this or that feature in the score, though quite logical and sensible in the study, seem wholly irrelevant in the theatre. He is much troubled, for example, by the "difficulty of deciding whether Mozart is serious or not at this moment or that," and has this passage on the "farewell" quintet and trio of the first act:

> The lovely music, in and by itself, breathes, surely, the very pathos of parting. These, we feel compelled to say as we listen, are not the wire-worked puppets of the preceding comic scenes, jerked this way and that by librettist and composer to wring an easy laugh out of us: if we listen to the music alone they are human beings touched to the heart by the pain of farewell.

True enough. But is it not part of Mozart's natural tact (how far conscious we cannot say) that he should have felt how brittle and tiresome two long acts of mere puppetry would become, unless relieved by more beauty and warmth of feeling than were logically required by the unfolding of the preposterous intrigue? Perhaps I am thick-skinned, but I have sat through a dozen performances of *Così* without experiencing the slightest discomfort at its extraordinary mingling of beauty, pathos and farcical absurdity; *au contraire*, it seems in some respects the quintessence of the Mozartian spirit. Just so with those high-falutin coloratura arias in which the ladies so vehemently protest their implacable modesty; it only adds, surely, to the fun and the richness of it all that the burlesque should be always half beauty, and the beauty half burlesque? There must be something in the climate of this opera which disturbs the usual equanimity of Mr. Newman's critical temper, provoking him, for instance, to write of that A major aria of Ferrando, *Un' aura amorosa*, loved by most musicians and all audiences, that it is "not merely conventional but commonplace," "long" and again "excessively long"; forgetting that no singer has found the slightest difficulty in getting it on to one side of a gramophone record, which is, after all, the normal length of a Mozart aria. "Doing his musical best according to his lights and those of his epoch"; such is Mr. Newman's verdict, oddly suggestive of the headmaster's comments at the foot of the school report; one begins to think that poor little Wolfgang would do better to take up carpentry next term.

The paper on *Così* is, however, the only flaw in a collection which promises to do for opera what Tovey has done for the concert repertory. A Toveian characteristic is the insistence on getting down to the bottom of every problem and back to the beginning of each story; one of the pleasures of *Opera Nights* is provided by the author's tireless tracing of the plot to its source, and his determination to leave no loose ends in its exposition. It is a book which newcomers to opera will find invaluable, while others will welcome the recollections which it will bring of pleasures now remote. The price may seem high, but the book's length and richness in musical quotation may be held to justify it. Not so, however, the illustrations (an excessively familiar gallery of operatic worthies, not always of the most exalted rank) which accord ill with the author's rather obvious contempt for singers as a race. Some of them might with advantage have been replaced by photographs of the best modern stage designs for the chosen operas—the brilliant *Eugen Onegin* sets, for example, used at the Bolshoi Theatre, Moscow.

DESMOND SHAWE-TAYLOR

A LOST LEADER

So Far. By W. J. BROWN, M.P. *Allen and Unwin.* 12*s.* 6*d.*

So Far is the autobiography of a brilliant Trade Union leader. Since 1911, when at the age of seventeen he put the boy clerks' case to the Macdonnell Commission, answering no less than 270 questions, until to-day, when he sits as Independent Member for Rugby, W. J. Brown has been organising Civil Servants in Trade Unions and teaching them the use of Trade Union power for transforming not only their working conditions but the whole life of the country. Under his leadership in the 1920's the C.S.C.A. became something more than an organisation for wage and salary negotiation. It inspired thousands of black-coated workers with the belief that Trade Unionism was meant not merely to defend the workers' conditions within capitalism, but to transform capitalism itself. The Civil Servants pledged all their funds and assets in support of the General Strike.

Now W. J. Brown is not only outside the Labour movement; he is one of its bitterest critics; and his autobiography will provide some good propaganda material to Conservative Party headquarters. Convinced that the Trade Unions, under the leadership of his enemy Mr. Bevin, are actively anti-Socialist, and that the Labour Party under Mr. Attlee and Mr. Greenwood has no will to power, W. J. Brown has become a sort of Tory Radical, capable of supporting such wrecking activities as the formation of the breakaway Busmen's Union. He is only fifty this year. But "So Far" is a misnomer; W. J. Brown has arrived at Dead End.

History will not be concerned either with Mr. Brown's brilliant polemics against Mr. Bevin, or Mr. Bevin's masterly methods against Mr. Brown; it will, however, record the fact that just as the Labour movement is the worse for failing to keep the loyalty of W. J. Brown, so W. J. Brown has himself lost by cutting himself off from the movement which helped to give firmness to a volatile character, balance to a hasty judgment, and humility to a somewhat cocksure mind.

It is strange how the curve of W. J. Brown's career parallels that of the movement from which he has withdrawn. They rise and fall together. For if an individual character cannot survive in political isolation, it is also true that a movement must languish which drives out men of his quality. Labour can justify expulsion of men like Cripps by pointing to his upper-class origin and his tardy conversion to Socialism. W. J. Brown has gone the way of Cripps, although his youth was an almost perfect type of the development of a working-class Socialist leader before 1914.

Son of a Margate plumber, he was brought up with six brothers and sisters on £2 a week. Both his parents were obviously unusual personalities; stunted by the sheer drabness of life, they jarred on each other. Family life was not happy. Brown won a scholarship to a high school and developed the inevitable inferiority complex of the Board School. At 14½ he left school to earn his living in London, and after a year of dead-end occupations by day and reading by night, won a place by open examination in the humblest rank of the Civil Service—the boy clerks. He describes all this so directly and unaffectedly that the early chapters of *So Far* read like the beginning of a Dickens novel. His first years, working in the Post Office Savings Bank on 14s. 7½d. a week, were, he writes, the happiest of his life. There, in controversy with his fellow clerks, his mind began to grow up.

He went through stages of conversion to religion, conversion to Socialism, conflict between Christian theology and Darwinism, conversion to fanatical Marxism and Pacifism, culminating in a violent opposition to the war of 1914. It was this intellectual development which drove him into Trade Union activity. Unlike an older generation who first built Unions and then heard of Socialism, Brown started organising his fellow clerks because Marx told him that Trade Unions were the instruments of Socialist revolution.

Perhaps this mental development accounts for his subsequent conflicts with the Trade Union bureaucracy. Whereas the other Trade Union leaders regarded and still regard Trade Unionism as an end in itself, and politics as a secondary activity, Brown conceived his black-coated union of Civil Servants as an instrument of political action. Inevitably he began to consort with those Socialist M.P.s—for the most part intellectuals—who shared his view of the function of the Trade Union. In 1930 he supported the Mosley memorandum on unemployment. A few months later he resigned from the Parliamentary Party, though he refused to join Mosley's new party.

So Far leads to two important conclusions. In the first place, it is the organisations of black-coated workers (whatever their social origin) which give the impetus to social change. In the second place, unless unity is maintained between black-coated and industrial workers, the energy and drive of the former, frustrated in its Socialist ardour, is diverted into either Toryism or active Fascism. These are not new conclusions, but they are given a new and compelling vividness by this autobiography of yet another lost leader.

RICHARD COVENTRY

THE MASTODON

The Dawn in Britain. By CHARLES M. DOUGHTY. *Cape.* Limited edition. 4 guineas.

This handsome volume, miraculously produced under present conditions, marks the centenary of the birth of Doughty. It has also a more signal emphasis than that, for it confronts the critics at a moment when patriotism, which is the main emotion directing this poem, has been restored by our experiences during the war, and lifted up from the degradation into which Tolstoy and international idealism had thrown it. Doughty's principle was that "the poet is not to meditate on man's vanity, but to serve his country."

Such a bald and simple statement as that sends us back at once to the Elizabethan outlook. It extends the point of view of the ranting speeches in Shakespeare's *Henry V*, and works a way back round three centuries of imperial expansion, to the morning-view of those days in the Renaissance seventeenth century when the world of scholarship, adventure, trade, ethics, and verbal expression was the Englishman's oyster, still to be opened.

By some quirk of temperament, Doughty was born belated with that Elizabethan outlook. Unless the reader realises this he will never fully appreciate Doughty's voluminous manner of approaching an idea with all sorts of imaginative embellishments that are in themselves further startings of factual enterprise, adventures of the mind as exciting as physical explorations. Through this, possibly, may also be explained how Doughty found no difference between the adventure of words and the adventure of action. Both were for him matters of colossal strain, sustained effort of will and courage, with simultaneous stretching of mind and muscle.

In 1865, while he was still at Cambridge, he adopted—if so vast and unprofitable an enterprise can have been consciously undertaken—this conception of the world as something pristine, and not sophisticated and time-weary. The consciousness, perhaps, lay in the effort to reorganise the English language so that he could express that purpose through a medium contemporary with it. But to go back in time, and to announce his discoveries there by means of a language also carried back in vocabulary, etymology, and syntax, was to ignore the actualities of the society around him, and of all that had happened in the intervening three centuries to make that society different from his dream.

For it remained a dream. One can accept the queer fellow's excitement in clash of arms, conflict of rumour, superstition and taboo, and the detailed incidence of physical comforts and discomforts. One can marvel at his re-creation of the fierce, single-minded morality of the primitive peoples in *Arabia Deserta* and *The Dawn in Britain*. One can even admire the way in which he hacks his way toward an expression in prose and verse of that morality, as it were with a two-handed sword. But common sense refuses to believe that all this was anything more than a re-creation, a sort of inspired pageant. And common sense is the basis of true poetry, just as it is the basis of true mysticism. Without it, cult, dogma, roundabout-ism and rigmarole supervene.

Did Doughty fall into that error? I believe he did, at least in his medium of words. We can assume that his Arabs were real Arabs (we have T. E. Lawrence's word for it), and that in *The Dawn in Britain* his Frankish and Iberian Goths were noble carles, nobler than the Romans whom they overthrew; but we cannot accept the language in which Doughty tells the story. By comparing the prose of the one great book, and the verse of the other, with Elizabethan writings, we begin at once to have misgivings. Doughty claimed Spenser as his verse-master. But I wonder why he did not claim Chapman, with whom he had much closer affinity, both intellectually and rhythmically? Spenser's verse was fluid, and glowing with that romantic colour (through an inspired use of epithets) which Doughty disclaimed. Doughty's verse suggests that he got the desert sands into his system. It ploughs its way knee-deep in shifting obstinacies. It labours round in circles, in a sort of lubberly dance that may have an esoteric significance if the reader has patience and energy enough to search. One can examine his technique in detail and remain completely puzzled. Why does he play such tricks with syntax, leaving sentences hanging over? Why does he clog up simple statements so that one has to sort out the facts and set them up afresh? Merely to take one example of his eccentricity, his use of the comma sets one doubting the claims that have been made for his work by his John the Baptist, Edward Garnett, and his later apostle, T. E. Lawrence. After describing a night's feasting and boasting, he wants to say that next day the Gauls test that boasting in battle. He staggers in, and drops the following load of commas on the page:

> . . . and what vaunts
> Some, last night, made they now, by deeds approve.

Why is the second comma after "night" and not "made"; and why is there one after "now" at all?

And here is a line describing how two warrior brothers are reconciled by their mother, after a quarrel:

> Long, hand, those germains stand, in hand, a
> when,
> With linked palms, they gathered flowers, in fere.

He sounds there to have split something infinitely more abysmal than an infinitive.

Now these are only two examples of the difficulties of style which one has to surmount before one can admire the cut of his coat. And even then irreverent thoughts creep in, and a sniggering recollection of Andersen's tale about the Emperor's clothes. Can it be possible, after all, that Doughty, *as a writer*, will never be anything more than an oddity, a crank who tried to put the clock back?

RICHARD CHURCH

NEW NOVELS

Elders and Betters. By I. COMPTON BURNETT. *Gollancz.* 9s. 6d.

The Company She Keeps. By MARY McCARTHY. *Nicholson & Watson.* 8s. 6d.

The Lost Traveller. By RUTHVEN TODD. *Grey Walls Press.* 7s. 6d.

Any writer who acquires a sect of devotees tempts a non-worshipper to irreverence. Now, for the third time, I have begun a novel by Miss Compton Burnett with all my hackles up. On the first occasion they wavered, but remained precariously erect to the last page; on the second they were down half-way through, and in this last case they collapsed with a gust of laughter on page 9. Indeed, should I be found eligible, I am now ready to take the sacraments of this mystery cult.

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not in spite but because of this waywardness. Outrageous to the realist, since this world and its inhabitants are flagrantly unreal. Outrageous to the aesthetic, since no concession is made to his hunger for pictorial description—we move from house to house, from garden to garden without the least instruction as to the appearance of house or garden. Outrageous to the psychologist, since the characters constantly act and speak quite *out* of their shadowy characters. Outrageous to the fantasist or the myth-maker, since these novels are entirely devoid of fantasy or myth. We search in vain for familiar landmarks, in vain even for some interior standard of judgment—this chapter is better than that, this novel is not so good as the last. The difficulty is that there cannot, here, be any comfortable half-way house. If you accept Miss Compton Burnett you are obliged to accept her wholly and indiscriminately. Here I had violently hoped for a quite different, a more vindictive, ending, but I was obliged to accept as inevitable the ending chosen.

Another difficulty. Whenever the critic begins to feel lost he is accustomed to search for a comparison. “Strongly reminiscent of the early James.” “If the influence of Turgeniev is apparent throughout, that is hardly matter for complaint.” This gives immediate reassurance. At one moment I contemplated Jane Austen as a life-belt, or at least a straw, on my horizonless ocean. But the comparison faded as qualifications reared their discouraging heads. There *is*, perhaps, a common quality—the same kind of irony and wit, the same kind of tragi-comic attitude to a deliberately limited world. But, lacking the more normal qualities of Jane Austen, Miss Compton Burnett has carried wit both to a finer and a more savage point. The comparison really cannot be pushed beyond the most hesitant suggestion of *some* affinity. For the clear truth is that Miss Compton Burnett is unique.

How answer the plausible criticisms of every school? The answer is that these criticisms are true and obvious, but irrelevant. One must fall back on the very foundation questions of criticism:—(*a*) What is the writer's intention? (*b*) Is that intention worth achieving? (*c*) Has it been achieved? A certain presumption is involved in answering the first question, but I take it that the intention is to reveal, by the searchlight of a penetrating wit, a limited area of the human personality. It is over the second question that readers divide into their irreconcilable groups of devotees and iconoclasts. On the third question I doubt whether there can be any disagreement. Worth achieving or not, the intention is fulfilled to perfection. Nor can there be much *argument* even over the second question—it resolves itself into a statement of reaction. “I was bored.” “I was transported.” There can be no proselytising by this sect.

And so one meanders in generalisations, and postpones the alarming attempt to describe.

The book opens with three ladies inspecting their new house; and for a few pages the devotee may be filled with apprehension. Is the familiar pattern to be altered? Are we to be deprived this time of the immense and garrulous family? There is no cause for alarm. Other (and what authentic) names, are soon mentioned—Reuben, Esmond, Bernard; we recognise this trio as a mere advance guard. The main body makes a breathless entry at the opening of the second chapter, and far from being cheated of the expected quantity, we learn that still another family awaits us, cousins and neighbours of the first. Once the scene is laid little can be gained from examining the story. There is, as usual, melodrama of the most satisfying kind—in this case there is tragedy (not, somehow, very tragic) and the triumph of evil. No one has such a shocking talent for describing the odious—one terrible touch is laid on another until the reader slaves for a fitting punishment. This is denied him, and one can hardly avoid the sensation of becoming, by this deprivation, oneself a victim of the writer's malice.

The nature of Miss Compton Burnett's wit is peculiarly difficult to describe, and no less difficult to illustrate by quotation. There are few fireworks, but rather a steady and cumulative stream of wit, to which each remark makes its own contribution. In fact the point of the remark is nearly always strictly dependent on its context. These examples are chosen, not for their supremacy, but for their relative self-sufficiency. “She walked in a drooping manner with an air of finding whatever was taking place too much for her, or perhaps of feeling that it would be too much if she knew what it was. A child, interrogated on what she would do were she grown up, answers, with conscious hypocrisy:—

> “We should do things for other people. I should give money to beggars, and I should give them enough. People give them too little to be any good.”
>
> “They have to give them little enough, to do themselves no harm,” said Terence.

But the quality escapes illustration. Yet I would say that it was irresistible, if I was not aware of my own unregenerate days and of the many resisters who remain. If only a few drops of it could be distilled into the works of more ambitious novelists! There is a profusion here which could well spare enough, yet do Miss Compton Burnett no harm.

If some freedom is allowed within the canonical framework, I would hazard one criticism. By introducing each character with a brief pictorial description, Miss Compton Burnett makes a concession to the visually-minded. These fail to make any real impression, and we would, I believe, be content to provide the faces and bodies ourselves.

This is difficult company for Miss McCarthy, and she survives the inevitable comparison with credit. She, too, is blessed with a marvellous wit, if a more conventional one. *The Company She Keeps* is a very good novel, in many ways the best American novel to have appeared in this country during the last two years. Yet here the three questions must be oddly answered, for Miss McCarthy has quite failed to fulfil her evident intention. The intention was to present a stereoscopic Portrait of a Lady, using now the first person, now the third, now the eyes of another character, and ending with a psycho-analytical “solution.” But the character of the heroine, though skilfully portrayed, fails to compete in interest with the portraits of other protagonists. *Rogue's Gallery*, *The Man in the Brooks Brothers' Shirt*, *The Intellectual*, *The Genial Host*—these incidental sketches have refused to remain merely illustrative of the heroine's progress; they have become self-supporting masterpieces of more or less savage delineation. The conclusion is not only psychologically convincing, but most imaginatively told. Yet the suspicion remains that this writer is really interested in the foibles and bald patches of others, rather than in her own psyche. It is significant that even during the analysis she indulges in a vicious, though perfectly appropriate, sketch of the analyst. This is a book which will provide continuous and intense enjoyment.

In Mr. Todd's book the landmarks are familiar, but somewhat confused. *The Lost Traveller* is a fantasy—or is it a satire? Are we in the precincts of *The Castle*, or over the mountains in *Erewhon*? The distinction is clearly of

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Capital paid up	**15,158,621**
Reserve Fund	**13,410,609**
Current, Deposit and other Accounts ...	**860,981,356**
Acceptances and Confirmed Credits... ...	**2,976,077**
Engagements	**10,478,546**
ASSETS	
Coin, Notes and Balances with Bank of England	**91,368,917**
Balances with, and Cheques on other Banks ...	**35,685,635**
Money at Call and Short Notice	**33,111,508**
Bills Discounted (Treasury Bills £31,377,069) ...	**32,979,939**
Treasury Deposit Receipts	**291,000,000**
Investments	**228,717,009**
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importance, for the intentions of the two forms are far apart. The Kafkaesque fantasy is a world of personal symbols, a revelation of the individual's hidden and tormented soul. It is clear that this can have little common ground with a social satire. In Mr. Todd's dream city bureaucracy and the blackout are satirised with imagination and effect—but we are also presented with innumerable purely personal symbols. At the end of the book, for example, fantasy predominates in the hero's impossible quest for the extinct Great Auk. With this important qualification—a lack of clarity in the writer's intention—the book is excellent. Mr. Todd is a poet and a nature lover, and these combined faculties have enriched his book with many beautiful and alarming descriptions. He writes in a curiously naive and deliberately (?) clumsy style which is inexplicably effective.

PHILIP TOYNBEE

Week-end Competitions

No. 730

Set by William Whitebait

A nice touch in *The Waste Land*—that poem of so many echoes—is provided by this variation of Goldsmith:

> When lovely woman stoops to folly and
> Paces about the room again alone,
> She pats her hair with automatic hand
> And puts a record on the gramophone.

Competitors are asked to try their hands on similar modulations, ironic or serious, from well-known beginnings. Since this is sacrilege, the nicest taste should be observed; pompous or rather faded originals are probably the best to choose. Limit, 12 lines. Solutions must reach the Editor by first post on Monday, February 7th.

RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 727

Set by Sam Smiles

The usual prizes are offered for the best review in not more than 200 words of any book that appeared last year.

Report by Sam Smiles

It is astonishing that competitors who can imitate Milton, translate French poetry and compose clerihews all with bewildering skill, should be floored by the writing of a "shorter notice," even when they can pick any book that lends itself to such succinct treatment. But almost all the numerous entries were pompous or verbose or ecstatic or facetious. Even Allan M. Laing descended to a time-worn pun. Among the better entries were those of N.P.T., N. Lewis, W. H. G. Price, Elsie Baytup, Frank Spooner and D. E. Tweed. Baitol provided the review that does not include even one sentence describing the subject of the book. I award a guinea each to Stanley J. Sharpless and Leslie Johnson, and half a guinea each to Elkan Allan and R.H.

THEY WETTED HIS HEAD. By HERBERT FERNÉE. *Faber and Faber.* 7*s.* 6*d.*

Assuming that the Elysian libraries are kept supplied with modern fiction, one can almost imagine this book to have been written in an hilarious mood by a completely uninhibited Wilkie Collins after an intensive dose of Anita Loos, Damon Runyon and P. G. Wodehouse. His favourite device of entrusting the story to various characters in turn is retained. The narrators are a free-lance journalist with loose false teeth ("when he spoke they continually beat him to it"), an incredible Edwardian stage vicar and three nubile young ladies, all with their curves in the right places. The author is at pains, with some success, to differentiate between their literary attainments. Wisecracks abound, the dialogue snaps and no topic, from posteriors to purgatives, is barred.

Notwithstanding appearances this is not a murder story; it is hardly a detective story, as what sleuthing there is falls to inexperienced amateurs. Nor can it be classed as a thriller; the action (except that of the purgatives) is insufficiently violent. It is a farce in novel form with a few gruesome touches.

It only remains to add that the morals of most of the characters are in complete conformity with the authorised economy standards.

LESLIE JOHNSON

GOD AND EVIL. By C. E. M. JOAD. *Faber.* 7*s.* 6*d.*

Here is Joad's quick, assured, tidy mind pecking at the eternal mysteries, wondering wistfully why there are no simple common-sense answers to the grimacing problems of life and death and right conduct.

Inevitably an agnostic as a young man, seeing Christianity ground between the brand-new millstones of Marx and Freud, Joad has recently been shaken by the monstrous spectre of wickedness in the modern world, into a mood of re-enquiry. Is there, then, something in Original Sin after all? One hears the precise voice raised in anxious pleading.

So Joad patiently sifts the well-known arguments again: Is there a God?; if so, how can He be all-wise, all-loving, all-powerful, and yet permit war?; etc., etc. This, one feels, is not just juggling to make a listener's holiday, but a genuine attempt at a cerebral rather than a spiritual level, to arrive at the truth. He bares his mind hopefully for a revelation—yet (alas) to be vouchsafed. God has floored the Brains Trust this time.

In short—Everyman's most readable digest of what theologians, saints, sceptics and infidels have said, more fully and generally more dully, about it and about during the last two thousand years.

STANLEY J. SHARPLESS

GREECE AND BRITAIN. By STANLEY CASSON. *Collins,* 7*s.* 6*d.*

This is not altogether a good book. Perhaps the subject itself makes for discontinuity. There are lapses of taste, too: was it necessary to end the chapter on Richard Coeur de Lion in Cyprus with "Enough to the French that they were installed in the island where Aphrodite was born"?

However, the subject is good. The connections traced between Greece and Britain lie less in the aridities of scholarship, though the scholars have their mention, than in the unconscious exchanges wrought by traders and liberators. The opening thesis is particularly ingenious—that Greeks, not Phoenicians, first discovered and trafficked with these islands.

What interesting and little-known men and incidents are here. Pytheas the Massaliot; Nicander Nucius; Theodore, last of the Palaeologues and buried in Devon; the British protectorate of the Ionian Islands, duly illustrated with that puzzle of young philatelists, the Queen's head haloed with Greek lettering.

The illustrations are the best part of what is mainly a picture book. There are old friends, but most are unfamiliar, and all good. How pleasant to meet the other Mr. Lear! Even pleasanter to meet the stiff, bright battle-panoramas of Panagiotis Zographos!

Yes, "Greece and Britain" is a good thing.

R. H.

THE NEW YORKER WAR ALBUM. *Hamish Hamilton,* 15*s.*

An Alan Dunn drawing . . . Stuffed shirt in theatre turning to wife. Caption: "It's the Internationale. If you don't know the words just mumble." Yes, I think that's funny, too, and so are about half of the jokes in this all-too-war album. Not that it matters what they are about as long as they make you laugh, but one can get over-tyred, so to speak. Judging by this book practically the only shortage in America has been that of rubber; but paper is obviously what we are lacking, as shown by this edition of the "New Yorker" series, much smaller and thinner than its predecessors. Unfortunately it is dearer, as well. The funniest artist? Peter Arno. His funniest drawing? Two soldiers are passing a house . . a red light shines . . . a tart, hand on hip, stands in the doorway. . . One turns to the other. Caption: "Is that one?" This is a book to be read—if you can spare the time in the book-shop.

ELKAN ALLAN

Personal

FABIAN Society requires accommodation for 100 to 150 members for Easter and/or Summer School. Schools, Hotels, etc., invited to send details to Sec., 11 Dartmouth St., S.W.1.

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